



BOWERY BOY

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No. 64

NEW YORK, JANUARY 5, 1907.

Price, Five Cents



Billy, the young Bowery sleuth, sprang wildly forward to intercept her; but he was too late to prevent the reckless plunge.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: American lads have always eagerly read stories of life among the street Arabs of our great cities. There appears to be some peculiar charm connected with these scenes among the lowly, even to boys who have never visited New York. To them the Bowery stands for all that is adventurous and mysterious, while its jostling crowds are the various actors in an exciting drama of real life. Believing that an up-to-date weekly would be gladly welcomed, if devoted *exclusively* to stories founded upon the exciting adventures experienced by wide-awake street boys, we have launched the Bowery Boy Library. It speaks for itself.



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NEW YORK, January 5, 1907.

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Bowery Billy's Trick;

OR,

PLAYING A DOUBLE HAND.

By JOHN R. CONWAY, Private Detective.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Bowery Billy, an adventurous street Arab, whose career in the midst of the whirlpools and slums of a great city brought him in daily contact with such a variety of mysteries and puzzles waiting to be solved, that he just naturally fell into the way of acting the part of a young sleuth, and took the keenest delight in mixing up with trouble, such as can always be found in the neighborhood of the once famous Bowery—a lad keen and shrewd as they make them, bold of heart, and ready at all times to take chances for a friend.

Jonah, another street arab, befriended by Billy, ambitious to become a sleuth, who makes good.

Shiney, the convict, with a scarred face and embittered life, who wipes out his black record by a "white" act at the last.

Mollie Jackson, a runaway girl from the country who goes to New York by appointment to meet a young man who takes advantage of her discontent to work out a little plot for his own gain.

Hiram Jackson, father of Mollie, ugly in temper, bound to rule, but brought to his senses by Bowery Billy.

Dickson, a city sneak who deludes Mollie, but loses in the play against Billy's "double hand."

Wilma Denton, the double of Mollie, Dickson's aide.

Myrick, the headquarters detective, who puts Billy "next" to the puzzle which is the theme of this story.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOCK-RAT.

"Aw, cripes!" grunted Billy.

And for once the remark suited the occasion. For in taking a hasty backward step while standing nearer the edge of the pier than he was really aware of, one of those sudden happenings which always makes the victim mad clear through resulted.

The backward step carried him off the side of the pier, and as a consequence Bowery Billy plunged downward into the swirling tide of the river.

Billy was as much at home in the water as a duck, and the time had been when he did not mind taking a plunge with his best clothes on.

But at that time his best were also his worst, and a wetting did them no harm. As they were usually too large for him, shrinking and drying improved the fit.

But that was in the old days before he cared how he looked. He was no dude now, but he liked to dress neatly, and so, when he took that backward plunge, his first thought was of the new suit which he had put on for the first time that morning, a suit which was up to date in fit and pattern, and which he had bought in a

Broadway shop instead of on the Bowery, where they give great bargains for little money.

He struck the water flat on his back, and he went under, head and heels. Over him a heavy coal-barge was being pushed up to the pier by a tug, and he had not time to draw a full breath before he went under. To swim under water until he could come up clear without danger of cracking his head on the barge taxed the little wind that he had in his lungs to the limit. When he came to the surface he panted and spluttered, and for a moment it was all he could do to hold his head above water without trying to swim.

But he was pushed up to the effort by the sound of a big ferry-boat plunging toward her slip. He was right in its track.

He did some desperate splashing, and, in spite of shoes and suspenders, he barely succeeded in getting clear of the danger, and he even kept himself on top of the great wave thrown up by the boat's prow instead of being again submerged, as would have been the case with almost any swimmer caught in that manner.

The odd part of it was that Billy had not yet been observed. It was early evening, and, as usual, the North River was just swarming with water-craft of every kind. As he swung around the end of the pier he was pulled up again by a steam tug just backing out of the slip on the other side. When he finally succeeded in getting hold of a timber at the end of the pier, he was more out of breath than he ought to have been had he taken a swim across the river, as he had done in past days many a time.

He clung for two or three minutes before trying to climb up. Then, when he finally clambered to the edge of the pier, he crawled along on his hands and knees until he reached a row of barrels which had just been unladen from one of the smaller steamers.

Then he sat up and leaned his back against a barrel while the water trickled from his clothes, formed a small rivulet, and found its way back to the flood into which Billy had taken his involuntary plunge.

Leaning forward, he peered through a narrow space between the barrels, and was rewarded by seeing what he was looking for.

A boy, of apparently about sixteen, was crouching on the other side of the pier. He had been looking over the edge into the water, but now, crawling along on hands and knees with a monkeylike motion, he reached the end of the pier, peered into the water again, and then hopped along back to a point just opposite the place of Billy's concealment. A moment after he disappeared between two rows of barrels, leaving Billy to wonder what he could be about.

This lad was really the cause of Billy's mishap, for the young Bowery detective had been observing him at the moment when he stepped backward too far and fell into the water.

More than an hour before Billy had come over from Jersey City on a Desbrosses Street boat, and then, as he had gone ashore, he had seen the strange lad crawl out of the water underneath the pier, sneak up over the side and remain concealed behind the boxes and barrels of freight.

Billy had lingered to observe him, first from a mere impulse of curiosity. But the curious behavior of the lad excited a deeper suspicion, so Billy had remained, compelled frequently to change his position to avoid ob-

servation because the other kept shifting about in such a singular fashion.

"Green bananers! But dis is slow," grumbled Billy.

He shivered, for a sharp wind cut across the river, and, in his wet clothing, increased his discomfort in a way which he would not have noticed two years earlier in his career, for the reason that he had then never known what it was to be really comfortable.

A degree of prosperity and a more civilized way of living were beginning to make him tender, like others who had fared well all their lives.

He was not afraid of hardship, but he was getting so that some of the miserable discomforts which he would not formerly have minded troubled him as much as they would anybody.

"Wot's become of dat cull now?" Billy asked himself when ten minutes had dragged themselves away, and the mysterious lad did not again show himself.

Billy took out his watch, but, of course, it was not going. It was a cheap watch, and stood him just a dollar and a half when it was new. He never carried anything better because the rough-and-tumble fights with now and then a plunge into the water was bound to use up good watches faster than he cared to replace them.

With his pocket-knife he pried off the case, and found that but little water had gotten into it. He shook it, gave the stem a twist, and it began to tick. He heard a clock somewhere striking eight, and he set the watch, at the same time reckoning that twenty minutes had passed since the moment when he had fallen off the pier.

Putting the watch back into his pocket he crawled cautiously along and peered out through another space between the barrels. And there, as he crept up close to the opening, his nose almost touched the nose of the strange lad, who was in the act of peering through from the other side.

There was an ejaculation, and then a scrambling on the part of the stranger to get out of the way.

Bowery Billy leaped over the barrels and alighted on the boy like a cat. There was a swift, hot squabble, in which Billy was the winner. In a twinkling he had the other on his back and was holding his arms down at his sides.

"Got yer!" chuckled Billy.

"Let go of me," snapped the other, twisting his head to and fro and trying to get at Billy's arms with his teeth.

"Aw! it ain't no use, fer I could lick yer wit' me hands tied. But I ain't goin' ter do nutting ter yer. I jest wanted ter know why yer was sneakin'."

"Same reason that you was sneaking, probably. None of your business."

"But yer was rubberin' at me."

"You was rubbering yourself. I seen you half an hour ago, and I heard you tumble into the drink, and I thought first that you'd got your finish, for I didn't see you come up again. Just the same, I got a glimpse of you when you crawled back onto the pier, and I've been waiting for you to get out of the way."

"I got off der ferry-boat, and yer was sneakin' here den. If yer gives an account of yerself, it's all right, and if yer don't, I has yer pinched, fer I happens ter be on der lookout fer two or t'ree kids about yer size. Now, talk straight."

"You're nothing but a kid yourself, and I'll bet you

stole them togs that you're swelling round in. They look as if they were stole."

"Aw! sure t'ing. I pinched dem in a shop over on Third Avenue, and I t'ought dey'd fit better if I shrunk dem onter me, and dat's why I jumped inter der water. I suppose yer believes dat yarn."

"I believes you wants to get off of me and let me go, for you're hurting of me. Oh, I know you, for I've seen you a lot of times, and you're nothing but a Bowery kid, only you've been lucky and had clothes and money give to you. You didn't used to be nothing but a dock-rat over on the East Side, and if you hadn't been lucky you'd been one now. It's a great thing to make a lot of swell friends."

Billy was surprised. He was trying to make sure whether or not he had ever seen his prisoner before. But he could not recall a single familiar line in his face.

"Yer don't know me, dat's wot," said Billy.

"What will you bet?"

"A nickel."

"Take ye."

"Well, who be I?"

"Billy Barlow, of the Bowery. You run a bootblack-stand over on the corner of Bayard Street, or you pretends to, though I'm thinking it really belongs to the Chink that does most of the work for you."

"Here's yer nickel," said Billy. And he fished out the coin and put it into the lad's hand, which he had released for the moment.

"I'd like to bet you again, anything you say," suggested the young stranger.

"All right, cully. I bets yer another nickel dat I can tell who yer be."

"Take ye."

"Yer name is Jonah, and yer come out of der ark—now give me der nickel."

The strange lad was staring up into Billy's face in a dumb, bewildered way.

"Who—told ye that they call me Jonah?" he faltered.

It was Billy's turn to be surprised. He had no more idea that the name he had mentioned was the one which the stranger was known by than he had that he was Adam, Moses, or any other of the patriarchs.

"Aw, cripes! I won't take back der nickel, fer, ter tell der trut', I hadn't the least idea wot yer name was. Does dey really call yer Jonah?"

"Surest thing you know. And you guessed it? Well, that's queer, and—let me up, won't you?"

"Naw."

"But you ain't going to have me pinched, Bowery Billy, for I ain't done anything. I was just rubbering to see somebody, that's all, and I thought they'd come on the ferry-boat that pulled in just as you tumbled into the river. That's the honest truth, and it's no bluff that I'm giving you this time."

"Wot was yer so shy about it fer? Yer was sneakin', Jonah, and I has ter know why. I'm on der lookout fer two or t'ree young chaps, t'ough, ter tell der trut', yer doesn't fit deir descript very well. Yer might jest as well own up, and if ye're straight, I ain't got no call ter bother yer."

The other hesitated. The ferry-boat which had come in a few minutes before was just pulling out again, and it would be some little time before its round trip

would be completed. The boy who called himself Jonah would have to wait till that boat returned.

"Say, Bowery Billy, I ain't got no business ter tell you a thing, and it ain't fair for you to make me."

"Yer can tell whether it's anyt'ing straight or not, and den I lets yer out of it. Dere ain't nutting mean about me."

"I don't know how straight it is. I was expected to meet a young girl, and she's a stranger in the city, and I was to show her where to go, and see that she got there all right, and then I was to quit. That's all I can tell you, and it's more than I had a right to."

Billy's brain was working faster than the other talked. By the time he had finished, Billy had decided.

But Bowery Billy kept his decision to himself. The lad whom he had captured seemed to be fairly shrewd and wide-awake, without being especially brilliant. He reckoned that it would be something like half an hour before another ferry-boat would be in. So there was no hurry about nailing the lad to anything, or taking definite action himself.

"Yer seems ter know somet'ing about me, Jonah, and I suppose it's because I has a reputation as a police special, and dat's what makes yer shy of me. Ain't dat right?"

"Yes, they say you are worse than the regular cops, for you are always suspecting somebody, and you pinches them the first thing."

"Dat's where yer are off. I doesn't pinch der most of dem quick enough. I ain't goin' ter pinch yer. I'm goin' ter let yer do what yer were sent to do, fer it ain't none of me business."

Billy got up and allowed Jonah, as he was called, to rise to his feet, greatly to the lad's evident relief.

But Billy had been so prompt to release him that the other was still suspicious. He began to edge away from the Bowery lad to make sure that the latter should not change his mind and jump on to him again.

But Billy did not attempt to follow him, nor did he show any inclination to leave him.

"Now what are you hanging around for?" queried the young stranger.

"Just ter see what's doin', dat's all. I didn't know but I might take der boat back, and stop over ter Jersey City to-night," said Billy, settling himself in a comfortable position.

"Oh, I see you are going to hang around and rubber, and see if I told you the truth about being here waiting to meet that girl. Say, do you think that is fair? I told you the truth about it, and I'm all straight, and you've no business to think that I ain't."

"Den it hadn't ought to trouble yer because I hangs around."

"I ain't caring for myself. But the chap that sent me here would make a kick if everything didn't go straight. It's on that account that I've got to be careful, and I'm sorry now that I told you as much as I did."

"Den der best way out of it is fer yer to tell me der rest of it. I must say, Jonah, dat yer looks pretty bum ter be sent here to meet a young lady, that is, if she's supposed to be particular. How are yer goin' ter know who she is, anyway?"

"She was going to wear something so I could pick her out when the crowd comes ashore. Then there won't be a great crowd on the boat, anyway, and I'll make sure of her easy enough."

"Den she knows yer are goin' ter meet her?"

"She expects somebody, and that's why she wears something for a sign."

"Wot does she wear?"

"Now you are asking questions again, and you are bound to worm everything out of me. I've told you now more than I have any business to, and I'm going to cut it out. Why don't you go along and let me alone?"

"Aw! but I didn't promise to do that. I just said that I'd let yer up, and I've done that. I said I might wait here and go back on the ferry."

"That's just an excuse. Oh, thunder! you are just the sort that they said you were. I was told to look out for you—that is—a fellow told me one time that you were worse then the cops, and I might find it out so if I wasn't careful."

"Aw, cripes!"

Billy was smiling as he looked into the flushed face of the lad before him. Jonah had made a bad slip of the tongue.

Now that Billy had a fair chance to look at him, he marked several points which he had not observed before.

The stranger lad had a thin, somewhat pinched face, as if he might not always have been well fed. His clothes were shabby, so bad, indeed, that Billy did not recall ever having worn anything himself so dilapidated, even in his unhappiest days.

Jonah's last remark indicated, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he had been advised to be on the lookout for Bowery Billy. That in itself proved that the errand upon which he had been sent was not exactly on the square.

As a matter of fact, it was not entirely by chance that Billy was there at the Desbrosses Street Ferry at that particular time. That very afternoon Mr. Myrick had asked him to look out for a runaway girl from a country town in the State of New Jersey, concerning whom the police of New York had received information.

A description of the girl had been given to Billy. It was believed that she had already reached the city, that is, if she intended to come there at all. It was thought that she had gone to New York by appointment to meet a young man who had met her the previous summer at a cheap seashore resort.

It was a common sort of a case—on the surface. It was intimated that the young man she was to meet was probably a scoundrel—that he was enticing her into a miserable trap.

Such was the outward aspect of the case. When Myrick had asked Billy to look out for the girl at a Jersey ferry, and had told him so much about the case, the young Bowery sleuth was inclined to turn up his nose at the job.

"Yer t'inkin' I likes der simple life, ter put me onter a reg'lar cop job like dat," Billy had said.

"It ought not to be beneath your dignity to save an innocent young girl from the country from a snare set by one of the unscrupulous young bloods of the city," said Myrick.

"Aw, cripes!"

"And then, there might be something more behind it," mumbled Myrick, looking up at the ceiling.

"Green bananers!"

"But, then, if you think it is too simple, why, I'll send somebody else."

"Naw! I takes der job."

"There may not be anything behind it—mind, I haven't said that there was, for I'm not sure myself. But there was a suspicion from the way the order came to me from the country town. The girl's brother is here in the city, but, for some reason, he isn't having anything to do with the search for the girl."

"I takes der job. If der ain't anyt'ing in it, den I doesn't blame yer fer puttin' me on."

"That's all. If I suspected anything in particular, I would give you a tip. But I don't. You simply go out hunting. If there is any game in the woods, you try and fetch it home. You'll be pretty sure to bag something."

It was so that the case had been given to Billy. He had gone into it with his usual vim, and he had a dozen persons, connected with the Jersey City ferries, on the lookout for him. At the same time he was looking out on his own account.

That is the reason why he was curious about the shabby young chap who had tried to dodge him. And now his suspicions were justified. Jonah seemed to be in a fair way to become the Jonah of the one who had hired him to meet the young girl.

Jonah began to look scared. He realized that he had made a slip of the tongue. He had been told to look out for this same Billy of the Bowery, and that it would be easy for him to do what he had been asked to do if Bowery Billy could be kept out of it.

And here he was, right up against the Bowery sleuth, and giving himself away by bad breaks right at the beginning.

He was not afraid of Billy so much as of the one who had put him onto the job. He was poor, he knew the sting of hunger and all the pinches of poverty. He had worked at odd jobs, but, without money and needing everything before he could get the cash to buy it, he had done some thieving.

That had gotten him into trouble. He had been up in police court for theft, and that went against his getting anything decent to do.

So much for the situation of Jonah, whose name fitted him better than did the ragged, baggy clothes which he wore.

He was under a temptation now to get out of the way and to let the job which he had promised to do take care of itself.

He would have done so had not the eyes of Billy been upon him.

"Say, I've caught yer, Jonah," said Billy mildly. "But yer needn't mind. Yer'll find me a better feller ter work fer than der cull dat told yer ter be on der lookout fer me. I'm easy, if yer don't try ter fool me. Say, jest go ahead wit' der stunt yer started out wit', and don't t'ink about me. Yer ain't ter blame if yer gits ketched if yer can't help it."

"I wish you'd leave me alone."

"Say, Jonah, yer've had hard luck, ain't yer? Yer've loafed round der docks—yer sort of a dock-rat—ain't dat right?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've been dere. Go ahead and don't mind. Fergit dat I've seen yer. Yer won't git pinched, and I'll see dat yer has yer feed."

Jonah had little time in which to decide. For just then they heard the whistle of the ferry-boat.

Jonah went to where he could see the passengers as they got off, while Bowery Billy kept out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIRL IN THE CASE.

Jonah observed the passengers as they came ashore from the ferry-boat, while Bowery Billy, keeping himself out of sight, kept his eyes on Jonah. The stream of people passed by, rushing out upon the street, while Jonah peered nervously at each woman and girl as she passed him. He was jostled and pushed by the hurrying men as they got in his way, and at last, when there was no one else to come off the boat, a policeman grabbed the lad by the shoulder, and, growling, marched him out onto the street.

Bowery Billy observed the whole proceeding with an idle sort of interest. Somehow, he had a feeling that the one for whom the boy was waiting would not put in an appearance.

If she was coming to the city to keep an appointment it was reasonable to suppose that she would make an effort to get a boat as near to a certain hour as possible.

Yet it seemed that she was expected on the last preceding boat, yet even this one failed to fetch her to the city.

It might be that the delay was due to accident. She might have missed a train coming to the city on the other side, and in that case she might arrive two or three hours later than was anticipated.

All this was something which Bowery Billy could only conjecture. After the waiting-room was clear of the few incoming passengers who, for one purpose or another, lingered for a few moments inside, Billy went back onto the street to find Jonah.

Billy was by no means comfortable in his wet clothing. The air was cool enough to strike a chill through the wet garments. At the same time, he had stood outside so long with the chilly breeze blowing on him that his clothing had partially dried. Billy was healthy, and his circulation was good, and this wasn't the first time that he had been soaked to the skin and had his clothes dry without taking them off.

He found Jonah loafing on the sidewalk on the east side of West Street, waiting for a chance to dodge the police later, when it should be time for another boat to come in.

When he saw Billy coming toward him his face actually lighted up with pleasure. Billy had at least been more friendly to him than the patrolman who had roughly shoved him out onto the street and ordered him not to show himself again on or about the ferry-slip unless he intended to cross on the boat.

"Say, Billy, she didn't come, and now, if I go back to look for her, I'll get pinched. Say, that darned cop has got the crust! I told him I was expecting a friend to come in on the boat, and he got next to me and kept shoving me right along ahead of him, and every third step he'd chuck his knee into the small of my back. I was wishing you'd come along and speak a good word for me."

Billy was laughing, for he had been up against the same kind of treatment in the days that were past. He knew how a policeman's knee felt in the small of his back.

"It's on account of der swell clothes yer wear, Jonah," said Billy.

"I ain't to blame for my clothes."

"Yes, yer be. Yer wants ter take a brace. If yer pitches in and works at der first t'ing dat comes along yer gits a few dollars, and a Sheeny fits yer out ter look like a swell. Of course, der stuff won't last, but it gives yer a chance ter git somet'ing ter do. Aw! but der outfit yer wears ain't fit fer nutting except beggin'. Yer might put yer arm in a sling and squat on der sidewalk and play a dirge on der harmonica and pick up some money dat way, fer everybody'd pity yer, if dey seed dem britches and dat jacket and t'ought yer was a cripple."

"I tried that once," confessed Jonah.

"And didn't it work?"

"No, some kids that knew me come along and put up a jolly, and I had to pitch in and thrash them, and I forgot and took my arm out of the sling, and that give away the whole game. I had to take a sneak or get pinched. You see, Billy, that I'm unlucky."

"Aw, cripes! I t'inks yer bound ter be unlucky. I've seen some chaps dat were dat way, and dey're on deir backs all der time. I can help yer a little, but I won't agree ter hold yer up, and if I gits yer onto yer feet, yer wants ter take a brace. Now, wot yer gittin' out of dis business?"

"Ten dollars. I thought it was a cinch."

"It ain't nutting, Jonah. And yer ain't even got yer money, and yer has ter take yer chance. If yer doesn't meet der girl, yer gits no pay, and now yer shut out, anyway."

"Say, can't you go back with me, Billy, and tell the cops I has business, so they'll let me alone when the next boat comes in?"

"Naw. But I'll tell yer wot I'll do. I lays fer der boat in yer place, and I meets der girl."

"But you wouldn't know her."

"Yer said she was goin' ter wear somet'ing as a sign fer yer ter recognize her by."

"So she is."

"Tell me wot it is, and I spots her."

Jonah glanced up and down the street uneasily. There was enough for him to worry about.

"What do I get for it?"

"Half yer money in advance, and der rest of it after I meets der girl. Ten dollars in all, and yer sure. Say quick, fer I ain't foolin'."

"I'll take it. The girl is to wear a small red bow of some kind of ribbon on the lapel of her jacket. I know I didn't miss it, for I had my eyes open all the time."

"So did I, Jonah, and I was watchin' out fer anyt'ing peculiar. If any girl had come ashore with a bow on like dat I would have spotted her."

"All right, then, Billy, fork over the five, and I gives you the chance to meet the girl. But, then, after you've met, what you going to do?"

"Wot was yer goin' ter do wit' her?"

"Find a cab for her, and have her driven over to a place in West Eighth Street. There the fellow was going to meet her, and I was to get my money."

"Dat's easy, and I can do der stunt. Now, say, have yer told me straight about der sign I'm ter know der girl by?"

"I don't get the other five, do I, if it isn't straight?"

"Naw."

"Then all you lose is five if I've lied to you, and you gets it back, I think, and I wouldn't dare to do it. No, Billy, I'm discouraged, and you're the first chap that's

been decent to me. Give me the money, and I go and gets a feed, for I'm so hungry my legs wobble."

Bowery Billy gave Jonah a dollar in silver and the rest of the money in bills—five in all.

"Der other five, Jonah, after I meets der girl. One t'ing more. Wot's der name of der cull dat hires yer ter do dis stunt?"

"He told me to call him Dickson."

"Dat's all. Der boat has gone back, and it won't be long before she returns. Now, brace up yer insides, Jonah, wit' a good feed. Git some good coffee—dat's injurious ter der systum, but it does yer good."

Jonah felt better even in anticipation, for it was hunger that really ailed him more than anything else.

Billy went back to the wharf and found a warm spot in the waiting-room to give his clothes a chance to dry. The time slipped away even faster than he cared to have it, for it was more comfortable to stay inside.

The big ferry-boat came in, a double-decker, and this time there were fewer passengers than there were on the earlier boat. It was too late for them to be coming over from Jersey City and not late enough to start across going back.

Bowery Billy posted himself where he could see all that came out of the ladies' cabin. There were not above a dozen in all. One of these was a young woman, trim of figure, neatly dressed, and wearing a veil. On the left lapel of the short, light jacket was pinned a small bow of bright-red ribbon.

She advanced somewhat hesitatingly, and, instead of going out directly onto the street, she stepped into the waiting-room.

Bowery Billy followed her.

"I t'inks yer der young lady dat I was sent to meet," said Billy, doffing his cap.

She gave him a keen look, and even through the veil which she wore he could see that she was pretty. There was an odd flash in her eyes as they met the gaze of Billy's.

"You are not just like the boy who was to meet me here," she objected, and he could see that she was looking him over from head to feet.

"Dat's owin' ter me gittin' a new suit of clothes. Yer see, I t'ought if I was goin' ter meet a lady I ought ter look as swell as I could."

"But that wasn't according to agreement. And what is your name?"

"I answers ter der name of Jonah."

"Aha!" murmured the girl. And again her eyes met his, giving Billy a queer sort of look—an impression, somehow, that he was up against something that was not so simple as he had expected to meet.

This girl might be from the country—her clothes were certainly not stylish—but she did not appear just like the sort to be easily imposed upon.

"The name is all right," she said.

"And I'm all right, miss, and yer finds me der candy if yer uses me straight. If yer waits here a minute, miss, I gits der cab fer yer."

"I supposed the cab would be all ready."

"But yer didn't come on der boat yer was expected and der cabbies axes money fer hangin' around. It comes out of me price. I doesn't keep yer waitin' but a minute."

"All right, Jonah; but hurry up."

Billy turned to go, and a sound came faintly to his

ears that caused him to look back at the girl who wore the red bow on her jacket.

Was he mistaken, or had he heard her laugh? One gloved hand was up to her mouth, but she stood with her back to him, and he could not see her face.

"Green bananers!" muttered Billy, as he went back across the street, and stepped into the restaurant which he had seen Jonah enter fifteen minutes before.

The boy was at a table shoveling down the provender. Billy touched him on the arm.

"I've met der girl, Jonah, but she ain't wot I expected. Didn't yer t'ink she was rather simple and ignorant of der ways of der city?"

"That's what Dickson said."

"How old?"

"About eighteen."

"Tall or short?"

"About medium."

"Light or dark?"

"Light golden hair, kind of fluffy, he said. She was to wear a veil, one of the spotted kind."

"Sure t'ing. Aw! it's she, all right, only she's tryin' ter make out dat she ain't so simple as she is. But, cripes! I t'ink she was laughin' at me. Now I gits der cab fer her, and here's yer other five. Say, come around ter me bootblack-stand ter-morrow at eleven o'clock. Have on some new togs, and maybe I gits yer a job. Keep shy of Dickson. Dere'll be somet'ing doin' before we're t'rough wit' dis."

Bowery Billy was right. There would be something doing, and with all his wit he did not even dream what it would be.

As he came out of the restaurant and went to call a cab, a slender girl with a golden, fluffy hair, a spotted veil over her face, and a bow of red ribbon on her jacket stood in the shadow on the other side of the street observing him.

"He isn't so very innocent, either, but I just know that he isn't the real Jonah!" she exclaimed in her low, musical tones.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Bowery Billy had obtained from Jonah the number on Eighth Street to which the cab was to be driven with the young girl from the country. It was his intention to fulfil that part of the contract. According to Jonah's statement, the man Dickson would be on hand to meet them, and that was exactly what Billy wanted.

So far, everything had gone so smoothly that it seemed to be almost too easy for Billy.

It was so easy, in fact, that it made Billy suspicious. Then that girl's sly laugh seemed to be still ringing in his ears, and he wondered what it could be that had so amused her.

"Aw, cripes! but dere's a lot of girls dat will laugh ter themselves in dat way when dey t'ink it will break a chap up. Dey likes ter get a fellow rattled, and dey knows how ter do it, all right, all right. Maybe dat she noticed dat me clothes were wet, and dat I looked as I'd been asoak in der river. Perhaps she t'inks dat I looks innocent. Green bananers! But I hates like time ter have a girl turn her back on me and laugh like dat when der ain't nutting funny."

It was so that Billy's thoughts ran, while he was engaging the cab, and fetching it back to the wharf where the girl from the country was waiting for him.

Billy went into the waiting-room and found the girl there, looking as meek and innocent as if she had never laughed in her life.

"Der cab is ready, miss," said Billy.

She rose quickly, and he noticed that she had not raised her veil. But Billy hesitated before conducting her to the carriage, and said:

"If I has ter talk wit' yer, wot's der matter wit' yer givin' me yer name?"

"Do you have to talk with me?" she asked, without looking at him.

"Sure t'ing, if I rides in der cab wit' yer. Did yer t'ink I was a clam?"

"No, not exactly a clam—you are not so modest as they are."

"T'anks; I doesn't want ter be."

"But if you give the cab-driver the order, will you need to go along?"

"Yes, I has ter, ter see dat yer gets dere safe. Dese New York cab-drivers has fits sometimes, and yer has ter look after dem."

"Oh, well, if it's as bad as that, I suppose that I'll have to let you go. And so you wanted a name to call me by? How would Wilma Denton do?"

"Dat goes great, just as well as yer own name, to dem dat doesn't know yer. Now, are yer ready? And hasn't yer any other baggage, except dat little suitcase?"

"This is all."

Billy led the way out to the street, where the cab was waiting. He carried the suit-case, and walked ahead, and again he was sure that he heard a low laugh from the girl's lips.

"Aw, cripes!" he muttered, without looking at her.

The cab-driver did not get off his seat, leaving Billy to attend to the passenger.

Bowery Billy had given orders to the cab-driver to drive to West Eighth Street by an indirect route, which would make the distance about double what it would otherwise have been. Probably he had an object in doing this, and it was not because he was seriously mashed on the girl. As long as he felt that she was making fun of him, he was safe.

When they were seated side by side in the cab, and the vehicle was clattering over the pavements, Wilma Denton was the first to speak.

"And your name is really Jonah?" she asked, in a low tone, that sounded as if there was laughter behind it.

"I'm a Jonah, all right," said Billy.

"But not the Jonah?"

"I ain't der one dat swallowed a whale, and had der stomachache on account of it fer t'ree days."

"Aren't you, really? Now, do you know, I don't believe that your name is Jonah at all, and I don't believe that you are the one who was to meet me at the ferry."

"Cripes!"

"Now, tell me why the real Jonah didn't come? Remember that I am an innocent young girl from the country, and I must look out for the traps and snares which they say I may find everywhere in this great, wicked city."

"Innocent—nit! Say, miss, I'm t'inkin' dat we're both playin' der same game, dat yer tryin' ter fool me, der

same as I tried ter fool you. And we don't make it very well. Yer asks me if I am the Jonah dat was to meet yer at der ferry. Naw, I ain't. And, just the same, you ain't der innocent young girl dat Jonah was to meet."

"How sharp we are!"

"Does yer own up ter it?"

"Now, you're wanting me to say that I'm not an innocent young girl."

"I'm wanting yer to say dat yer ain't der same girl dat was expected ter meet Dickson in West Eighth Street."

"I don't seem to be likely to meet him right away."

"Why not?"

"Because we aren't going toward Eighth Street at all."

"And that proves it. Yer knows der city as well as I does. Say, what's der meanin' of dis? Where's der girl that was really comin'?"

"She isn't coming," said Miss Denton sweetly.

"Aw, but ain't yer sharp! Now, who's der victim? And wot's der game?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"I'm really goin' ter know—see?"

"Not from me, Bowery Billy!"

The young Bowery sleuth leaped up from the seat, as if he had been stung.

"Cripes!" he gasped.

"So I hit it right, did I? Well, I was told to look out for you, and the moment that I suspected that it wasn't the real Jonah, I suspected that it was the real Bowery Billy."

"Great bumbleshutes!"

"Now, Bowery Billy, I don't think that I will need you any more to show me the way to Eighth Street. I don't think that you have done just right, to deceive an innocent young girl from the country, in this fashion. Only think what might have happened to me if I had suspected nothing."

"Just wait a bit, Miss Denton—yer better cut out der innocent-young-girl business, and tell me der trut'."

"No, Billy, I can't do that. You have been fooled, that's all, and you might as well take your medicine, and get out of the way. You are a very amusing boy, but I'm not needing entertainment of the kind that you can provide. Shall I ask the cabby to stop to let you out, or will you?"

"Yer needn't bother yerself, fer I ain't ready ter go yet."

Billy was conscious of a quick movement on the part of the girl at his side. He turned upon her quick as lightning, and clutched the gloved hand which he saw darting in among the folds of her dress. He held her wrist with an invincible grip. He drew her hand away from her dress skirt, and something fell upon the floor of the cab.

"Naw, yer don't!" said Billy.

It was a small revolver which had slipped from her grasp and fallen at her feet.

They were face to face, Billy half-crouching before her and clinging to her wrists. He could see the gleam in her eye, and he could hear her quick-drawn breath as she writhed and struggled to free herself.

"This is cowardly!" she hissed.

"Naw, it ain't."

"You had no right to stay, when I told you to go."

"Yes, I had."

"Has not a lady the right to choose whom she may
ade with?"

"Dat depends. Yer was playin' a trick, and I spotted
yer. Yer was too sure of foolin' me, and yer t'ought
dat because yer was young and pretty dat Billy of the
Bowery would do everyting yer told him. But yer
has too much crust, and I happens ter be pipin' the
game."

"I wouldn't have shot you—I only wanted to get you
out of the carriage. I suppose I went about it in the
wrong way. Now, I'll ask you to go, real nice and
pleasant."

"And try to coax me, too?"

"Yes."

"Will yer raise yer veil, if I lets yer?"

"What for?"

"So I can see yer face."

"Oh, I didn't know but it might be for something
else. How shy you are, Billy!"

"Aw, cripes, but yer der limit! Naw, Wilma, we cuts
out der spooning till we gets t'rough wit' der business
part. Den yer finds me der candy. Now, I hates ter
make yer trouble, but it's up ter yer. Tell me what's
der game?"

"I can't tell you, really."

"Dat's bad, Miss Wilma, fer it leaves only one t'ing fer
me ter do."

"What is that, Billy?"

"Yer has ter be pinched."

"No."

"Sure t'ing. I don't know yer, and yer comes on der
ferry in place of der girl dat was expected. Yer re-
fuses ter tell me wot der game is dat yer are playin'. I
was on the lookout to protect an innocent girl from the
country."

"And you don't think that I'm innocent enough?"

"Not ter need me protection."

"Well, I don't want to be arrested, and I don't be-
lieve that I'm going to be. I suppose I'll have to tell
you something that I meant to keep on the q. t. The girl
from the country—I mean the real one—is truly good
and innocent, and she was intending to meet Dickson
here to-night. He was fooling her, but just why and
how I haven't yet found out. She isn't pretty, but it is
a fact that her people have some money. Dickson met
her at the seashore, and wheedled her into thinking that
he had fallen in love with her. She is older than he,
but the only beauty that she has, besides a decent figure,
is her hair."

"And dat's like yers?"

"Yes."

"Go on wit' yer yarn."

"Her people objected to her marrying Dickson, as they
knew nothing about him. But he persuaded her to
meet him here, and she, being of a romantic nature, was
foolish enough to agree to it. She confided her secret
to a girl friend in the city, with whom she corresponded."

"The young lady here was wise enough to inform the
police. I suppose that is the way that it got to you."

"Likely dat's der way."

"It's the way that it got to me."

"How is dat?"

"One of the inspectors, whom I have helped quite a
little, in a quiet way, suggested that I impersonate the
girl who was coming to meet Dickson. I saw her friend
here, who knew all about the ribbon-bow sign, and other

signals agreed on. I thought I would let the young
Jonah take me to see Dickson in place of the girl whom
he expected to meet."

"Dat was a scheme. So yer in der detective business
yerself?"

"Yes. I thought that I would fool you a little, but I
didn't mean to have it go quite as far as this."

"I should t'ink not. Now, dis rings us both in at der
same time. I meant to go with you to meet Dickson,
t'inkin', of course, dat yer was der innocent country
girl."

"And now I suppose you hate to give it up?"

"Yes, I hate to give it up."

"Well, it isn't necessary. But I had better meet him
alone first, and you can follow in another cab. Will
you agree to that?"

Billy hesitated. But his mind was soon made up.

"I agrees."

"Well, we have not much farther to go, in spite of the
roundabout way you had the cabby take me."

Billy spoke to the driver.

The cab drew up at the sidewalk curbing, and as Billy
stepped out he noticed that they were at Washington
Square.

"I cuts across and meets yer in ten minutes," he said,
as he slammed the door shut and hurried across the
square.

"What a faithful little chap that Bowery Billy is, and
yet he isn't much more innocent than the young girl from
the country. Well, it isn't going to be real easy for me
to beat him, but, to turn it around, he isn't going to have
a perfectly lovely cinch trying to get ahead of me. But
he swallowed the last bluff, I reckon, for I told him an
awfully straight story, considering that I made up every
word of it as I went along. But, really, that Billy of
the Bowery is interesting, and if I only get ahead of
him I sha'n't regret having made his acquaintance."

Such was the reflection of Wilma Denton when she
found herself alone in the cab.

At the same time she called out an order to the driver
to hurry up.

Meanwhile, as Bowery Billy trotted across Washington
Square, and chose the shortest cut to West Eighth Street,
he was grinning and muttering to himself.

"Dat was a slick yarn she told me, and it seems
wicked not ter swaller it. But I'm t'inkin' she doesn't
git to der place on Enghth Street much ahead of me.
Even if she does, and manages ter skip me dis time, it's
better dan fer me ter have her pinched wit'out havin' a
chance ter find out der game she's playin'. It's better
ter give her a swing and win der race in der last lap.
But, say, Myrick was right when he told me dere might
be somet'ing behind dis case. It ain't der cinch I
t'ought it was."

When Bowery Billy got to Eighth Street he was not
certain whether the cab had passed that point or not.
But he hurried on, and in a short time he found himself
in front of the number which he was seeking. There
was not a soul in sight—that is, no one who could possi-
bly be Dickson, and the cab was not in view.

Had it not yet reached the street? Or had it been
driven away in another direction the moment that Billy
lost sight of it?

Billy accosted a youngster on roller-skates who glided
toward him. The lad was playing right in front of the
number for which Billy was on the lookout."

"Did a cab jest drive up here?" Billy demanded.

"Sure."

"Anybody git out?"

"No. Somebody got in."

"Man or woman?"

"Man."

"Which way did it go?"

"That way—down Macdougall Street."

In a flash Billy was at the corner of the street named, and he was in time to catch a glimpse of the cab as it whirled around another corner and sped back in the direction of Washington Square.

"Dat settles it—her yarn about bein' a detective was a bloomin' fake, jest as I suspected. She t'inks she's slick, and so she is, but she ain't all der candy."

Bowery Billy did not move out of a walk as he made his way down Bleecker Street, stepped lazily upon a surface-car, and thence, after making a change, in a short time brought up at Mulberry Street and walked into Myrick's office.

It was ten o'clock, and, in the ordinary course of things, Myrick would not have been in the Mulberry Street office. But Billy happened to know that the headquarters fox had a late appointment that night, and that he would be likely to be on hand until near midnight.

He was not disappointed, and Myrick did not seem surprised to see him.

"I thought you might possibly drop around," he smiled.

"I didn't suppose yer'd expect me."

"Well, I didn't, exactly—of course it all depended on how you made out meeting that girl over to the ferry. Did she show up?"

In a few words Billy told Myrick just what had occurred.

"And you let them get away?" said Myrick.

"Dere was only one way ter help it, and dat was ter pinch der girl, and I'm t'inkin' yer'd never gotten anyt'ing out of her in dat way. It would have put Dickson on his guard, and everyt'ing would be sealed up tight. Yer has ter have somebody ter rubber at, or yer don't find out nutting."

"But if you had stayed in the cab and kept the girl with you until you had reached the place on Eighth Street, then you would have been sure of her, and there would have been the chance of catching the man. Probably you would have lost him, but you would have at least proved the girl a fraud when you was right face to face with her, and there's always the chance that one of her sort may weaken when they find the game is all in."

"Den yer t'inks I made a mistake?"

"Possibly; possibly not. But you would have still been onto the girl, and if at that stage of the game you had thought best to let her go, you could have done so easier than you could catch her now."

"Aw! but it ain't dat girl dat I want. It's der one from der country."

"You aren't sure that there is one."

"I t'ink dere is, jest der same. Wilma Denton got wise ter der cops bein' on der case, and so she played dat bluff jest ter queer dem. She was expectin' me, and now she t'inks she has t'rowed me off der track. She has convinced yer dat der girl from der country business is a fake, and dat's jest wot she's tryin' fer."

"You may be right, Billy. She has shown herself to be pretty deep, anyhow, and so we're not to look for

simple tricks from her. I guess, Billy, I won't butt in. If any ideas occur to me, I'll let you know, for two heads are most always better than one."

"I thought I'd tell yer how it stood, and I'd like yer advice."

"I've none to give. You'll manage to handle it somehow. It's a rather curious case, and you seem to have found it amusing, especially the part with Wilma Denton. And you didn't even kiss her, Billy, when you had the chance."

"Naw."

"You did well. You say she's pretty and she's certainly smart, and you always had a way of standing in with her sort. They all seem to like you."

"Marie Blain, fer instance," murmured Billy.

The next moment he was sorry that he had mentioned that name, for it caused a gray shadow to pass across the countenance of George Myrick, a shadow such as Billy had not seen there before for a long time.

The romance of Myrick and Marie Blain, the famous woman crook, was an old one, but it was one that they would never forget. It had come near throwing Myrick out of commission altogether, and it had left more of an impression on Bowery Billy than everything else that had come into his career.

But this was not the place to speak of it. And Billy had made a mistake in mentioning that name in Myrick's presence. The reason that he had done so was that there had been something about Wilma Denton that had, in a way, reminded him of the one whom he had called Sweet Marie.

"I watches out fer der ferries fer der girl from der country, and I'm t'inkin' she shows up, and it may be ter-night, fer dey plays der trick as fast as dey can while dey t'inks I'm t'rowed off der track."

Myrick did not speak again, and Billy went out and returned almost directly to West Street.

The restaurant which had been visited by Jonah was still open, and Billy was not a little surprised to find the boy still loafing in its vicinity.

"Wot yer hangin' round here fer?" Billy demanded.

"Well, I'll tell you," said Jonah. "It took me a good while to fill up, for somehow there was a place in my stomach that the grub didn't reach. I suppose because it had been empty so long, and it had to have time to pack down."

"I've felt dat way meself," nodded Billy.

"I think I must have been in there an hour, for it ain't long since I come out. When you got the cab for that girl I got up and watched you as you got into it and rode off, for I was wanting to get a glimpse of the girl. I see her plain as could be when she got into the cab. Well, fifteen minutes ago, or about that, when I come out of the restaurant, I saw a cab drive over to the ferry wharf and a man and woman get out of it. And I thought it was the same cab, and that it was the same girl that got in with you."

"Cripes, Jonah! And so yer hung around ter watch?"

"Yes. I would have gone over but for that crusty cop."

"Yer've done a good t'ing, Jonah, and I t'inks I gives yer a job wit' me till der end of dis game, fer I needs ter be in t'ree or four places all at der same time. Hang around here, Jonah, and I sees yer again later."

Bowery Billy ran across to the ferry-slip which he reached just in time to board an outgoing boat.

CHAPTER IV.

JONAH IS TURNED DOWN.

In passing through the waiting-room to go on board the ferry-boat, Billy had made sure that Wilma Denton was not there. Once on the boat he made sure, likewise, that she was not a passenger.

In this he was somewhat disappointed, for, from what Jonah had told him, he had judged that she might possibly have been too late to take the preceding boat had that been her purpose. Could he have found her on this one it would have been as easy a stroke of luck as had come his way for some time.

But everything was not coming his way, although he had been fairly successful so far in his efforts.

He could not help but wonder why the girl had returned to the ferry and crossed over to the Jersey City side.

Then it seemed evident that Dickson was with her, for Jonah had seen a man get out of the cab and accompany her into the ferry-house.

"I tinks I was right and Myrick wrong when he t'ought I hadn't ought ter let dat girl git away. Der real girl from der country is still expected by dem, and dey means ter meet her demselves, and when Dickson hired Jonah ter do der stunt he did, it jest ter t'row dust in der eyes of der cops, fer he suspected dat dey was gittin' wise ter somet'ing doin'."

"Say, Billy, I thought I'd come over with you!" said a voice close behind him. And turning, he saw the shabby, forlorn figure of Jonah at his elbow.

"Dat's all right, Jonah, only dat I ain't sure dat I has any use fer yer. And yet, come ter t'ink, I might have, fer two pairs of eyes are better dan one. But say, yer a lonesome-lookin' chap, and dat's right."

"I'm feeling first-rate with that big feed inside of me."

"Well, in future yer wants ter git a hustle on, and never again let yer insides git empty. A chap ain't no good when he's hungry, I knows dat, fer I've tried."

They stood in the bow of the boat and looked out across the shimmering water at the twinkling lights over on the Jersey shore.

The breeze that was blowing across was growing sharper, and Jonah, in his thin clothing, felt the chill of it more than Billy did, although the latter was not yet quite dry from his plunge in the river earlier in the evening.

Jonah shivered and huddled close to Billy's side. At the same time a few drops of rain splashed in their faces and the few passengers who were standing outside rushed for cover.

Billy and his companion descended to the lower deck, and they were among the first off the boat.

There was a considerable crowd, for they were returning home from the Manhattan shore.

When they were off, Billy said:

"Yer knows Dickson, Jonah, and I doesn't, so yer can spot him easy if yer sees him anywhere around. And I tinks yer would recognize the girl just as quick as I would. We takes a whirl around t'rough der waitin' room to make sure if either of dem are hangin' around here. Now, let me tell yer just what I'm lookin' fer, den yer'll be better able to help me. Yer bright enough to keep shy of givin' yerself away. Now, about this

Dickson --is he of the sharp sort, der foxy kind, ter catch onto t'ings quick?"

"He's sly. He doesn't say much, but he has a way of just saying a word or two, holding his head down and looking up at you through his eyebrows. I think he has a sneaky look."

"Is he slick in his ways, like a gentleman, and does he talk smooth, or is he kind of rough?"

"Oh, he's smooth enough. But, as I said before, he doesn't do much talking. Just spits out two or three words, then looks to see how you take it. Sometimes he doesn't finish what he starts to say. He's queer about that."

"Dat's what I was after—I likes ter know der sort. Now, dat girl is a slick talker, and mighty glib. Now, did yer see her plain enough when she got in and out of the cab, so dat yer would know her face if yer seen her close to?"

"I ain't sure about that. I could see her hair, which was light and fluffy, and the way she was dressed. I think I can spot her, all right."

"Well, now, I'll tell yer somet'ing. Dat wasn't really der girl dat we was lookin' fer, but in a general way she looks like her. So dere might be another one come along wit' light, fluffy hair, and der same general make-up, and yet to look in deir faces dey might not be much alike. Just keep yer eyes open, and if yer sees a girl like dat, be shy about lettin' her get her eyes on yer. And, of course, yer knows enough not to let Dickson get a look at yer."

"Ain't you going to be around?"

"I comes around before a great while. But I goes out on der street first."

"And if I see them, and they go anywhere, shall I follow them?"

"Just enough ter get an idea where dey goes, den come back here where I can find yer, fer I'll see yer again soon."

"All right. I'll be careful as I can."

With this, Billy went off on the street, and made his way directly to the Jersey City Police Headquarters, which were close at hand.

Jonah felt the importance of what he had been required to do. He knew that Bowery Billy was a police special, but it was hard for Jonah to realize that he had actually been called upon to assist in the piece of detective work. He began to feel as if he had already started out upon the career of a detective. He had read some detective stories, and the idea fascinated him.

It occurred to him that it might be possible for him to distinguish himself, the same as Bowery Billy had done. Why not? Billy, not so very long ago, had been a poor street waif himself. Mr. Myrick, at the headquarters, had taken a liking to him, and given him a few little things to do.

Billy had done those things so well that he had been trusted more and more; then, by a few lucky hits, he had gone to the top.

That was the way that it looked to Jonah. He little dreamed the real skill and mature wisdom which Billy of the Bowery had demonstrated time and again until he was looked upon as a wonder, and always with respect by the most experienced officers of the department.

Jonah had paid close attention to Bowery Billy's instructions. At the same time, he believed that he was fully at liberty to make the best use of his own genius.

There were plenty of young chaps who start out with the idea that they have too much genius to allow themselves to be tied down to special instructions. Sometimes that is the reason that they fail to rise as fast as they think they ought to.

After Bowery Billy had gone off, Jonah put on a mysterious air, and swaggered around through the waiting-rooms, imagining that he might make an impression upon the people who had the honor to observe him.

He was unmindful of the fact that his jacket and trousers were ragged, and that his hat looked as if it had been stolen from a ragpicker. He did not realize what a forlorn face he had, and that he could not have looked shrewd if he had tried ever so hard, for it was contrary to his nature.

He cast sharp glances into the faces of all who came in and out. He acted so queerly that he really did begin to attract some attention, and that flattered his sense of importance yet farther.

Suddenly Jonah felt a hand on his arm. He turned quickly, and found himself confronted by a young lady with fluffy, golden hair, a graceful figure, and her face covered by a veil.

Jonah braced himself. Here was the chance for him to show Bowery Billy that he had the making of a detective in him.

"If you please, sir," said the girl, in a low, hesitating tone, "would you be kind enough to tell me if it is the Desbrosses Ferry runs from this slip?"

"Why, certainly, miss. Let me see—I think a boat goes out in about five minutes. You are, I believe, the young lady from the country? And you were expecting to meet Mr. Dickson, over in the city?"

Jonah spoke airily, as if he was an especially commissioned officer, whose duty it was to assist and instruct timid strangers.

The girl stared at him, and he observed then that she was not especially pretty, although her expression was a pleasing one.

"Mr. Dickson, did you say?" she returned.

"Yes, Mr. Dickson, in Eighth Street. I believe he was expecting you. I was requested to be on the lookout and see that you got to him in safety."

"Yes, I wish to see Mr. Dickson, but it wasn't the understanding that anybody was to meet me at the ferry, either at this side or the other. I was warned not to trust strangers. If you please, I prefer to look out for myself."

"But Mr. Dickson requested me——"

"You will have to excuse me from accepting your help. The boat goes from here, and I can take care of myself very well."

She turned away from him coldly, and Jonah felt like—a Jonah.

It was really the first time that he had ever been turned down, for the good reason that he had never before given a girl the chance. And he did not like it for a cent.

He stared after her as she stepped briskly along, and fell into the line of those that were going onto the boat. She had purchased her ticket, and, observing the others, dropped it into the chopper. And in another moment she was out of Jonah's sight.

"Thunder!" he then exclaimed.

He glanced about him helplessly. Two minutes be-

fore he had felt as if he was a great detective, but now he felt too small to be visible to the naked eye. And he wanted Billy.

He rushed out upon the street, anxious to see if Billy was coming back. If the boat were to go first, he hadn't the faintest idea what to do. Billy had ordered him to wait for him there, and yet he had a feeling that he ought not to allow the boat to go with the young lady on board without keeping an eye on her.

While he was trying to decide what to do, a man and woman rushed up. The woman had light, fluffy hair, a trim figure, and she wore a veil. In the general make-up she was almost the exact counterpart of the one who had just spoken to him. And even Jonah was sharp enough to guess that she was the one whom Billy had encountered.

The man was Dickson. That Jonah was sure of, and he would gladly have sought concealment to avoid recognition.

They passed him so hurriedly that he was sure that he had not been observed. But, just as he thought that he was safe, Dickson turned and looked straight at him.

The next moment the man had pounced upon Jonah, and was clutching his arm, and leering at him savagely up through his brows.

"You here, Jonah?" exclaimed the man.

"I—I just thought that I'd come over," faltered Jonah.

"Well, come along back with me. Hurry—I'll pay your fare."

Dickson dragged the boy along, bought his ticket, still clinging to his arm, then pushed him ahead into the line. There was Wilma Denton waiting for them and laughing.

"Poor Jonah!" she murmured. And in a moment more they were on board of the boat.

It was about one minute later that Bowery Billy appeared on the scene. He looked about him for Jonah, and not observing him he made some hasty inquiries.

Jonah had been noticed on account of the manner in which Dickson had forced him to go along with him.

Instantly Billy made a rush for the boat. The number of passengers was not large, but there is always a rush when it is time for the boat to start. Billy got aboard, and at the same time there was a man ahead of him who seemed to be as anxious as he.

Billy would not have observed this man especially, but for one thing. There was something about him that spotted him unmistakably as being from the country.

He was a big, burly man, with a short, thick neck, and cheeks so fat that they hardly gave room for his small eyes. He breathed loud and hard, and mopped the perspiration from his face, as if he had been racing against time to catch that boat.

Billy was compelled to push up against him, and the man half-turned and glared at him.

"Don't step on a man's heels, boy!" he wheezed.

"Den turn yer heels around der other way, and it's yer toes dat gets it," retorted Billy.

"None of yer sass!"

"If yer don't say nutting to me, cully, yer won't get nutting back."

At this, Billy crowded ahead faster, and was looking for Jonah, whom he failed to see, however, on that side of the boat, as he had gone in with Dickson and Wilma Denton.

Billy did not care to be seen by Wilma. He would rather for the time miss getting at Jonah. But he was intensely curious to find out what Dickson and the girl were about, why they had come over to that side, and now were going almost directly back.

As Billy looked into the women's cabin, on the lower deck, he got a glimpse of Dickson, Jonah, and Miss Denton. The girl was seated, but Dickson was still holding the boy by the arm, and looking at him up through his brows.

Just then the big man, upon whose heels Billy had trodden, rushed past him, and made a lunge toward the group which Billy was observing. And then, to Billy's astonishment, the big man grasped the girl's arm, and dragged her to her feet, while a low cry burst from her lips.

"Let go of me!" she fairly screamed.

"Hands off, you lubber!" snarled Dickson. And one of his small, white fists landed on the big man's chest, which gave out a sound like a bass drum.

It was hard for Billy to keep out of it. Not that he had a great amount of sympathy for Wilma Denton, and he certainly was not worrying about Dickson. But it was the most puzzling occurrence that he had run across for a good while.

The big man did not seem to mind the attack of Dickson. He was glaring into the face of the girl—he snatched her veil, and stripped it off, and then fell back, releasing her with a grunt of astonishment.

"Well, I'm bamboozled!" he exclaimed.

And now Miss Denton began to laugh, for the big man presented a comical figure, and she seemed to understand that his attack upon her had been a mistake.

All the passengers in that part of the boat had gathered around the excited group, and, concealed by those in front of him, Billy succeeded in overhearing all that was said.

"Perhaps you made a mistake," said Wilma Denton, looking at the big man with an impudent expression.

"Well, I should think so. And yet you are both the same figger, and your hair is the same, and yet, by thunder! your faces ain't no more alike than as if one of you was black and t'other one white."

Dickson retired to the background, and again grabbed

the arm of Jonah, who had made the most of his opportunity to escape.

"You are excusable," said Wilma.

"But they said the girl was inquiring for this boat, and it was my girl, too."

"Well, old man, it's a pity to lose your girl, but a nice-looking man like you might catch another."

The big man seemed to have no sense of humor, and the impudence of the young woman did not even appear to touch him.

Then the crack which he had received from Dickson's fist he had likewise seemed not to mind. He kept looking at the young woman as if it was hard for him to get it out of his head that she was the one he was seeking.

To Bowery Billy the show was more than amusing. He was not slow in understanding that the big man was the father of the girl from the country, and that, filled with parental wrath, he was hot-footed after the foolish runaway daughter.

He had followed the girl he was seeking by means of close inquiry, and it seemed that he had traced her to the Desbrosses Street Ferry.

Whether the daughter was really on the ferry-boat or not Billy was not yet certain, but he believed that she was. Probably at the last moment she had either discovered that her father was in close pursuit, else she so strongly suspected it that she was keeping out of sight until the other side could be reached.

Dickson was evidently uneasy. He now came forward and began to talk to the big man in low tones. He tried to draw the latter apart from the curious passengers, who, now there seemed to be no further prospect of an actual fight, began to mind their own business. As they cleared away, Billy was obliged to beat a retreat to avoid being seen by Dickson and Wilma Denton.

Jonah again found a chance to slip away from Dickson. Having succeeded in sneaking out of that part of the cabin, he suddenly found himself confronted by Billy of the Bowery.

"Wot's der meanin' of dis, Jonah?" Billy demanded.

"Why, Dickson run afoul of me, and he was mad because I was over on this side, and he made me come on board with him. I suppose the young woman told him that it was likely that I'd sold out to you."

"Yer ought ter kept shy of him. But wot about der other girl?"

"She's on the boat."

"Be yer sure of it?"

"Yes, because she asked me if this was the right boat. I didn't know what to do, Billy, but I thought you'd want me to keep her in sight, and I offered to look after her. But she was stiff about it and didn't want no part of me."

"Yer tried to do too much, Jonah. I didn't want yer ter do nutting dat yer wasn't obliged ter till I got around. Now, on yer life, Jonah, don't yer give it away ter dem people dat I crossed over on dis boat. We takes a look around fer der other girl."

Billy began the search, keeping Jonah along with him. It seemed as if they had been over every part of the boat, and yet they could find nothing of the big man's daughter.

Billy dared not make any inquiries of the other passengers. Yet the search was as thorough as he could make it, and it was totally without result.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIGHT ON THE PIER.

Bowery Billy had learned one thing about Jonah. This was that, although the boy was honest enough, he could not be trusted. He was not content with doing just what was asked of him, because he wanted to do more.

When the slip was reached on the Manhattan side, Billy ordered Jonah to go ashore and to mingle with the crowd. He told him not to fall into the clutches of Dickson if he could help it, and if the villain tried to force him to go along with him, to make such a row about it that the man would have to desist. At least, Jonah should know enough to do so much.

Bowery Billy was wanting to get ashore ahead of the crowd, but to accomplish this without giving his presence away to Dickson and Wilma Denton called for close work. At the last moment he drew Jonah aside and exchanged jackets and caps with him. Then, getting into the fore part of the bunch, he managed to dodge off the boat and get out to the street, while Jonah hung to the rear and did not get out at all until the last of the other passengers had left. Billy stationed himself where he could observe the passengers as they went out onto the street. The big man from the country was prominent enough so that he easily kept sight of him. He was likewise on the watch for the other girl with the fluffy hair, and he seemed to take no further interest in Dickson and his companion.

What sort of a bluff Dickson had put up in his little confab with the countryman was not important, since it was evident that the latter had no suspicion that the young man he had talked with was the one whom his daughter was going to meet.

Billy was beginning to get matters clear in his head. Dickson and the Denton girl were pals, and they were working hard to get hold of the other girl whom Wilma was made up to resemble. The friend of the country girl in the city in whom the intending runaway had confided in a letter had called the matter to the attention of the police and that had made Dickson a lot of trouble.

Billy saw the passengers string off the boat, he saw the big man watching them as he was doing, he saw Dickson separate from his companion to call a cab, and then observed that the Denton girl was likewise on the lookout with ill-concealed uneasiness over the non-appearance of the one they were all looking for.

Dickson and his companion kept the cab waiting for some minutes. At last they seemed to give it up, and the cab drove away with them.

But the big man still waited, pacing to and fro and swearing all to himself. By this time people were coming in for the return trip. There no longer seemed to be any hope that the country girl would put in an appearance.

Billy accosted the man.

"Say, cully, I'm t'inkin' dat me and yer are tryin' ter git next ter der same t'ing," said Billy. "Yer was lookin' fer yer daughter?"

The man turned upon him savagely.

"Well, can you tell me anything about her? Blast the huzzy! I'm darned if I don't horsewhip her after all the bother she's given me, if I ever do get my hands on her!"

"Maybe dat's why she keeps shy of yer, fer girls don't take kindly ter horsewhipping, not if she's much of a girl. Jest der same, it ain't a good t'ing fer her ter be knockin' round der city and dependin' on strangers ter look out fer her. Say, mister, der yer mind tellin' me wot's yer name?"

"My name is Jackson, Hiram Jackson, and there ain't no man stands better than I do over in our town. Why, I own half the town, and I boss it, too, and when the time comes that I can't boss my own family, I'll know the reason why. That's who and what I be."

"Well, dat's enough, cully. I suppose yer had reason ter t'ink dat yer daughter come over on dat boat jest now?"

"I was sure on't. More than a dozen different ones told me that she went aboard the boat, and there was four or five that she axed if that was the right boat. Yer see, she was never so far away from home before, and that made her uneasy."

"Jest der same, it looks ter me as if she missed it. Dere was another girl on der boat dat looked some like her."

"Yes, and I made a dive at her, thinking she was my Mollie. But come to git a look into her face, they were hardly a mite alike. She was one of your sassy city girls, and she kept laughing right in my face."

"I seen der whole of it, mister. I happens ter be a police special here in der city, and we got next ter der scheme ter ketch yer girl in der trap. We don't know yet wot deir object is, but we've give dem a lot of trouble, and der ones dat meant ter take her in charge don't know

now where ter look fer her, fer dey, too, t'ought she come on dis boat. Dey jest drove off in a cab, but dey hung around and rubbered until a minute ago."

"That's so!" roared Jackson, in sudden excitement.

"Aw, sure t'ing. It was dem dat yer was havin' der confab wit'."

"I wish I'd known it, by mighty! I would have thrashed that fellow till he couldn't hold together! And who's the other one?"

"She was der girl dat yer mistook fer yer daughter."

"And they knew all the time who I was looking for, and yet they had the cheek to give me their names and ask me for mine, and to tell me that they'd let me know if they seed or heard anything of my Mollie. At first the girl laughed at me, and then when I told her what I was after, she pretended to feel real bad. Say, here in the city ye never know who to trust, do ye?"

"Not if yer green. Dat never gives me much trouble, fer I ain't in der trustin' business. Now, cully, we understands each other, or I t'inks we will before we gits t'rough. If yer Mollie come over on dat boat, she was foxy enough ter take a sneak so dat nobody see her after she went aboard. Now, yer wants ter take my advice. She knows dat ye're after her, and she's scared of yer."

"That's because she knows what's coming if I ever catch her, the huzzy!"

"And dat's why yer'll never ketch her unless yer more foxy and gives her ter understand dat yer'll treat her right if yer git her back. She is more afraid of yer dan she is of any trouble she could git inter in N' York. Dat's why she trusts strangers who pretend ter be kind ter her. Yer can't blame her fer dat."

"But I'm going to run my own family."

"And while yer tryin' ter run dem, dey gits on der run, and yer loses dem, see? Now, I advises yer ter keep shy, ter put up somewhere at a hotel and wait till I reports ter yer. I finds der girl, yer can bank heavy on dat."

"Feel sure of it, do you?"

"I feels sure of it."

"Then you'll fetch her to me, and mind, if I get my hands on her——"

"But yer won't, old man, not if yer goes at it dat fashion. I'm goin' ter see dat Mollie, as yer calls her, keeps clear of dat Dickson, and any other city trap. But I ain't passin' her over ter yer ter let yer abuse her."

"But ain't she my own girl?"

"Likely she is; but yer don't own her, jest der same as yer does a horse, and yer've got ter use her right."

"I guess I won't ask anybody what I'm to do with a member of my own family when they make me all the trouble that that huzzy's doing."

"Dat's all right, cully, and yer can rave jest as much as yer likes, but when it comes ter der pinch, it's Billy

of der Bowery dat stands by der girl, and it's Billy of der Bowery dat's talkin' ter yer. Dat's all. If yer changes yer mind, yer calls around at Police Headquarters on Mulberry Street, and yer gits used right. But if yer hangs around here on der street and raves and swears, yer gits pinched. Yer may boss yer own town, but yer ain't big enough ter do der stunt in little old N' York."

Billy turned his back on Jackson, who again fell to pacing to and fro and venting his real nature in as rich a variety of oaths as Billy had ever listened to.

Billy crossed the street for the express purpose of making Jackson think that he had no hope of finding the missing girl at the ferry. He kept out of sight until Jackson also crossed over, inquired the way of a policeman, and then disappeared up a side street.

Then Billy hustled back to the ferry. He still believed that Mollie Jackson had come over on the boat, and that she had remained in hiding, and that, in deadly fear of her father, she would cross back over again rather than risk meeting him in New York.

Billy was too late to catch the boat. He had a weary wait of it until it returned.

But few passengers came back. Mollie Jackson was not among these.

"Aw, cripes! But dis is bad," grumbled Billy.

Just then a policeman pushed past him, an officer that was a stranger to Billy, probably one who was attached to the West Side Station, and Billy saw that he was closely observing those who came from the boat. After that, Billy kept an eye on him, and saw him go on board. A sudden suspicion came into the head of the Bowery lad.

"Old Jackson is getting down to business, and he has sent that cop to be on the lookout for his Mollie. He t'inks she will keep shy of him, and so he has her pinched by a cop. I don't blame der girl fer runnin' away from home, if she has an old crank like dat cull fer a father. And—but, say, dere comes der old duck, now, and I can tell by the way he is lookin' after der cop dat I guessed der trut'."

Sure enough, there was Jackson lumbering across the street, with his big body and short legs, swinging his arms as if he was using a scythe in one of his own hay-fields.

The more Billy saw of this man the more he disliked him. In the first place, he had thought that the runaway girl might be wholly to blame. But now he did not blame her. His sympathies were all with Mollie.

The big man was marching toward the boat, which would not go out for some minutes. Billy was not particular about meeting him, and he walked out on to the pier next to the slip.

But Jackson had his eye on him, and he followed along, and Billy turned to face him.

"Say, young fellow, I wants to tell yer that ye needn't bother about lookin' after that gal. I have spoke to a policeman, and I ain't needing any of your help bossing my family. You are nothing but a boy yourself, and I don't know nothing about you."

Bowery Billy was angry. There was a detective case that he was working up, and he wanted to go about it quietly. Dickson was playing a game, and what that game might be was really more important than as to whether the girl arrived or did not arrive, as Dickson and the others who were looking for her expected.

"Did yer t'ink, cully, dat yer was boss of der police in New York?" Billy demanded.

"I'm boss of my daughter, and I have my say who is to look out for her. If I want the police to take her into custody for me I'll tell them to do it, but I ain't engaging any boys to do the business for me."

"Aw, yer don't say! Now, does yer know dere is a t'ing or two dat yer has to learn before yer gets t'rough wit' dis trick?"

"Maybe there is, but I ain't going to ask you to learn me. I want you to get right out of the way, and if my Mollie comes ashore, I want you to let her alone. I won't have you speak to her. I've given the policeman his orders, and I guess he is able to carry them out without the help of any understrapper like you."

As Jackson said this, he waddled toward Billy and grabbed him by the arm, as if he would lead him back to the street and send him about his business.

But Billy did not stir from his tracks. He stood like a rock, and the arm which the man had grabbed was jerked free, and the Bowery lad met his savage glare with the same kind of an expression on his own face. The man had a way of twitching his mouth to one side and half-closing one eye when giving one of his imperative orders. Bowery Billy twisted his mouth, and half-closed one eye, in exact imitation of the other's grimace.

"You darned little runt!" roared Jackson.

And he made a lunge with his heavy body toward Billy, as if he would push him off the pier.

Billy side-stepped, and at the same time slapped the man's cheek with his open palm—a hot, stinging blow that brought a red glow to the man's face, as if he had been branded by a hot iron.

The fury of the big man knew no bounds. With a roar of rage, he flung himself upon his young assailant. His big fists thrashed the air in an infuriated attempt to overwhelm his adversary in a single attack.

But none of the furious blows touched Billy, who danced about him as if he were animated by a current of electricity.

For more than a minute this continued, and all Billy did was to keep on the defensive by constant and nimble dodging.

Jackson was a powerful man. In his own town he had a great reputation for fighting. He had spoken the truth when he had said that he bossed the town.

His strength, his ugly temper, and the fact that, in a small place, he was counted as a rich man, all combined gave him a sort of power that carried everything before him.

All the antagonism in Billy's nature was aroused by the opposition of this man; he was glad that Jackson had invited the fight. Almost from the first Billy had an almost irresistible impulse to pitch into him.

Bowery Billy was a natural born fighter, and his associations with respectable people, and his success in the world had not killed out the old impulse for fighting his way, which had been nurtured during his early life on the lower East Side, among the roughs and toughs of the Bowery and adjacent streets.

Billy allowed the big man to thrash the air until he began to breathe loud and hard from exertion. By that time Jackson discovered that he was not doing any execution. He desisted, and prepared to go at his adversary in a more scientific manner. And while he was working in the science, he received a slap on the other cheek and a jolt on the jaw from Billy's fist.

The big man reeled back, then recovered himself and sailed in again.

But Billy was getting down to business. Every clip that he gave to Jackson made him feel more like delivering another.

It should not be understood that Billy of the Bowery counted himself able to get the best of the fight, no matter whom it might be that began it. Yet he was well built, possessed uncommon agility, and his muscles were like steel. He had fought his own battles from his earliest remembrance.

In the battle with Jackson, Billy had every advantage excepting those of weight and bulk. In pugilistic skill there was not very much for Billy to learn.

From this moment Billy took the aggressive while before he had been only on the defensive. He dodged or parried the clumsy blows of his adversary, while he thumped and hammered the head and puffy face of Jackson as often and as hard as he pleased. And he kept this up until the big man was fairly gasping for breath, and his small eyes were closing up from the bruises that he was receiving.

By this time Jackson began to realize, in a vague sort of way, that he was up against something which he had not reckoned on.

And as the fact slowly dawned upon him, the fury which had possession of him at the beginning of the fight began to subside. In other words, the experience of getting thrashed was taking the ugliness out of him, for the time being, at least.

"Say—say—ain't this about enough?" he gasped.

"Naw, cully—yer has ter have just one more, and dere it is!"

And Billy's fist landed square between the man's eyes.

Had he not been so heavy that blow would have felled him. But his weight counted when it came to keeping him on his feet. A man of lighter weight would have been knocked out by far lighter punishment.

"Dat's all, cully; unless yer really want some more," said Billy.

The man took out a big handkerchief, and wiped the blood and perspiration from his face. When he spoke again, it was in a milder tone than Billy had ever heard him use.

"Say, boy, you're a terrible fighter, ain't you?" he exclaimed.

"Well, yer see, it used to be me regular business. I ain't been doin' much at it lately, but yer got me mad."

"Well, by mighty, it's the first time I was ever licked since I growed up, and that's a fact. I could have beat if I could only have got at you, but you're so darned spry, and keep dancing around so, and I got myself all out of breath for nothing."

"Dat's a part of der game. If I'd stand still, and put me hands in me pockets, any kid could t'rash me."

"That's a fact. Oh! I ain't going to squeal—you beat me, all fair enough. Of course I could have fit quite a spell longer, but what was the use? Say, I guess I made a mistake when I called you off the case. After all, I don't know but I'd better let you look after my Mollie. And I'll wait for you to fetch her around."

"And then yer'd be ugly as time to her till she watched her chance so dat she could run away again."

"Don't you expect me to boss my own family?"

"Boss nutting. If yer uses dem right, dey don't need bossin'. If dey likes yer, dey are willin' ter do 'what yer wants dem ter, but if yer keeps dem scared of yer all the time yer makes dem hate yer, and dey won't do nutting unless yer makes dem. Dat's der trut'. Naw, I won't fetch der girl ter yer till yer says yer will be kind ter her, and promises ter cut out der bossin', and dat's straight."

This was the first time in all his life that Jackson had heard the plain truth thrown straight in his teeth.

He had been vanquished in the fist-fight with Billy of the Bowery. And now he was in a fair way to lose in a contest against Billy's will.

CHAPTER VI.

BILLY TO THE RESCUE.

Bowery Billy and Jackson separated, the latter pretending, at least, to be in better humor. Where the man went Billy was not sure, and, for that matter, he did not so very much care.

Late as was the hour, the young Bowery lad was tolerably sure that there was still a fair chance of finding the missing girl on or about the ferry upon which he had kept such a close watch for so many hours.

In the first place, Jackson himself seemed to be sure of it, else he would not have asked a policeman to watch out for her. Then Dickson and his companion had likewise been persistent, and Billy was not convinced even yet that they had given up looking for her.

There was one point about their behavior that puzzled Billy. They seemed to show no anxiety or disappointment at the last because they had not succeeded in meeting her.

"I goes somet'ing big dat dey've seen her already, and dat dey've told her how ter keep shy till me and Jackson gives up lookin'. Dey gits out of der way jest ter make us t'ink dey've given it up. Aw! but dat Wilma Denton is foxy, and I'm t'inkin' she's a good deal sharper dan der man."

It was so that Billy reasoned. He went on board of the ferry-boat at the last moment before it pulled out from the slip. He saw the policeman whom Jackson had sent on board walking about over the boat, but paying no particular attention to any one. Billy did not take the trouble to speak to him.

Late as it was, there was a considerable number on the boat, the belated ones that came over to Manhattan to amuse themselves during the evening. Billy kept his eye on the policeman, who showed greater signs of activity as the ferry-boat approached the Jersey City slip. The officer spoke in a somewhat excited manner to several of the passengers, and Billy saw him making his way toward the stairs to the upper deck.

The Bowery lad cut in ahead of him, and as he did so he saw the young girl run swiftly up the stairs. The policeman saw her, and uttered a shout.

All that Billy stopped then to observe was the fact that the girl had light, fluffy hair, and that she wore a veil. From the glimpse he obtained of her, Billy might easily have mistaken her for Wilma Denton.

Billy hesitated no longer. He raced up the stairs, and called in a distinct voice:

"Mollie Jackson—I looks out fer yer; dere's nutting ter be afraid of!"

She gave a single backward glance, and, looking past Billy, saw the policeman at the foot of the stairs. She evidently believed that Billy's call to her was merely a ruse to insure her capture and arrest.

Maddened by fear, the girl reached the upper deck, rushed to the rail on the port side of the boat, and then, with a frantic scream, she sprang over the side.

Billy, the young Bowery sleuth, sprang wildly forward to intercept her, but he was too late to prevent the reckless plunge.

He glanced back, and saw the policeman just at the head of the stairs.

"It's death ter der girl!" gasped Billy. And without a moment's hesitation he leaped to the rail, gave a single glance down into the swirling tide, and then dived from the deck.

He heard a hoarse shout from the policeman as his body shot down toward the water. Then the plunge was taken, and a moment after he was doing battle with the foaming wake of the big ferry-boat.

To win in that battle for himself was not a doubtful undertaking for Billy of the Bowery. His only doubt was as to his ability to save the girl. For at the moment as he came to the surface, blinded by the spray that dashed in his eyes, he was not even sure that she had fallen clear of the boat or that she would ever come to the surface.

Taking into account the direction of the current, he made a swift calculation as to the direction in which she would be swept upon striking the water, and in that direction he turned his face and bent his effort, swimming with the tide, which, with the current of the stream, was sweeping outward with a speed that was greater even than that of the boat.

The latter swept past him, and in a moment he had crossed its wake, and then, to his intense relief, he saw something rise to the surface in front of him, something that for a moment was touched by the glimmer of the lights from the shore and was then blotted out by the shadows and the black, rolling water.

"It's der girl!" breathed Billy.

She was close at hand. A few strokes brought him to her side, and the next moment he caught her around the waist and realized that there was a conscious movement of her arms, as if she was trying to swim.

A glance into her face, which was close to his own, showed him her wide-open, terrified eyes full of mute appeal. It occurred to him then that it might not be the first time she had ever battled with waves and current. This was a suspicion which was to be verified later, and fortunate it was for both of them, for in that moment her presence of mind did not forsake her.

"Hang on, and I pulls yer out of dis!" panted Billy.

She made no audible response, but she showed that she understood what he had said. She clung around his waist with her right arm, leaving both his arms free. And he realized that she was making an intelligent effort to keep to the surface, leaving it to him to tow her ashore.

They were already within the shadow of the buildings along the water-front, the light passing out and over them and rendering them the more invisible to those who might be watching for them.

Shouts and commands came from the ferry-boat, which

had slackened its headway, although it was on the point of gliding into its slip.

For Billy the battle was an easier one than he would have dared to hope. There was no more doubt of saving the girl's life. The fight was not for this, but to save her from her pursuers, the father whom she feared on one hand and the villains whom she did not fear on the other.

Billy was at home under the docks, and he knew that there were few of them that did not abound in hiding-places of which the thousands of people who trod the streets of the city never even dreamed.

A few strokes carried him with the girl in among the black shadows underneath the pier. There he clung to a timber for a minute or two to regain his breath. The girl was still clinging to him, and he could barely distinguish the outlines of her head and face between his own and the shimmering surface of the river beyond.

"Yer needn't be scared of me, Mollie Jackson, fer I ain't in der hire of yer old man," said Billy, in a low voice.

"Then who are you?" she asked.

"I'm Billy of der Bowery. Yer've been takin' big chances, and yer've been trustin' a snide. At der same time, I ain't blamin' yer fer keepin' shy of old Jackson. He's an ugly old salamander, if he is yer daddy."

"Then you know him?"

"I've seen him, and we had a scrap. He sent der cop onter dat boat ter have yer pinched."

"I knew it. I've been hiding on that boat for two hours. I didn't dare to get off on either side of the river, but just now I thought I would make a break for safety, and it was then I saw the policeman, and knew that he was looking for me. I'm used to the water, I cannot remember a time when I wasn't able to swim, and so, rather than to fall into his hands, I jumped into the river. But I was terribly exhausted, for the swift tide and the wake of the big boat kept me submerged until I had no strength left. I think you saved my life."

"Yer alive, anyhow, and it don't make no difference who saved yer."

"But they will search the river for me."

"But dey won't find yer. Now I has me wind, I gits yer inter a place where dey won't t'ink of lookin' fer yer. Hang onter me, and pretty soon yer has a chance ter use yer feet."

She did as he directed. He let go of the timber and swam farther under the pier. He hastened his movements by taking hold of the timbers and pulling himself along. They kept on thus for some distance in the deepest darkness. Then the feet of Bowery Billy touched upon a hard surface, and the next moment they were wading up a gentle incline. And a little later they were out of the water, but still surrounded by the blackest sort of gloom.

Bowery Billy groped his way a short distance farther and then paused. From his pocket he took an electric flash-light in a water-proof case. Then he flashed a point of light about them, showing them to be in a narrow underground passage, with pipes and conduits running along overhead.

They walked on for a short distance, and came to a place where the passage branched off to the right, and there they caught the glimmer of another light that burned steadily, like a candle.

Billy halted abruptly, and shut off the flash-light. At the same time the girl clutched his arm more tightly, impressed by a sense of alarm by the sudden act of caution on his part.

"What is it?" she asked, in a whisper.

But before he could answer the light ahead of them moved, and then went out. At the same time they heard the sound of stealthy footfalls approaching them.

Billy gently pushed his companion back against the wall of the passage, and stood waiting. The footsteps ceased, and there was a moment of breathless silence, a silence so oppressive that Mollie Jackson could hear the beating of her own heart.

Then from out of the darkness a gruff voice exclaimed:

"What do you want?"

"We wants nutting but a chance to get out of dis place," said Billy.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Billy, der water-rat, and I just fished a girl out of the drink, and I wants ter get back ter terre firmy. And, say, cully, yer wants ter go easy wit' us, as der girl is shy, and she t'inks a good deal of me, and it would break her heart if yer did me any damage."

"You are a fresh one, anyhow," growled the voice. Then Billy heard the footsteps approaching nearer, and at the same instant Billy made use of his flash light, throwing it full upon the advancing figure.

The latter recoiled, with a gruff oath. Billy saw him half-raise a revolver, which probably the man had in his hand all the while.

"Aw! Shiney! so it's you, is it?" said Billy.

"Bowery Billy!" gasped the man, upon whose rough and scarred face Billy's light fell with a full glare, bringing out every line and every scar with the utmost distinctness.

The man was a hard-looking customer. Billy knew him well. He was a professional crook, a convict, who had been for a long time wanted by the police of New York, and who had been missing for some months in a most unaccountable manner.

Billy had once been requested to be on the lookout for him, but it was not a commission to his liking, and he had not agreed to undertake it.

Shiney, as the man was called, glanced past Billy, until

his eyes fell on the girl. He marked the fact that she had been in the water, and noted the terrified expression of her face. What he saw bespoke the truth of what Billy had told him.

"You fished the girl out of the water?" he growled.

"Dat's der trut', Shiney, and both of us are as wet as der river can make us. We wants ter get out of dis wit'out doin' any more swimmin'."

"What did you come in this way for? If the girl was in the river and you pulled her out, why didn't you go ashore with her, instead of sneaking in here? Come, give us a straight yarn, for I know you, Billy, and your tricks. You'd play any kind of a bluff, just for a chance to rubber."

"Dat's right, Shiney, if dat was der game; but it ain't dis time. Yer see, der girl wants ter keep shady just as much as yer do yerself. It's a straight yarn dat I'm givin' yer, Shiney. And if it was only meself dat I had to look out fer, I wouldn't be makin' any excuses."

"We ain't wanting you butting in here, and now you are here, I reckon that you'd better stay, till we finds out what's doing. I heard that the cops put you on my trail, a spell ago."

"Dey tried, but I didn't get on. I had plenty of business wit'out."

"I don't like it, Billy. Who's that girl?"

"She is a girl from the country, and she ran away from home, her old man followed her, and put the cops on her track. I takes pity on her, and I agrees ter look out fer her, and dat's why I didn't go ashore wit' her. I've been t'rough here before, Shiney, and all yer has ter do is ter let us get out the other way, and I agrees not ter bother yer."

"You agrees not to bother me," growled the man, while his face twisted itself into a smile that seemed to add to his hideousness, instead of softening its repulsive expression, as a smile ought to have done.

The girl, looking at him, turned away her face with a shudder. She was impressed by a sense of terror that was different from anything that she had ever before experienced.

She looked at the face of Billy. He certainly evinced not the slightest sense of alarm. If he felt any concern he certainly did not show it.

His air of confidence reassured her. Perhaps, after all, she reflected, the danger was not so great as she had imagined.

"Come, Shiney, let us out of dis, and I makes it right wit' yer," urged Billy, whose only anxiety was on account of his companion.

"And the first thing that you will do will be to set the cops on the watch for me. I know you, Billy. I know there is a price on my head, and you're the sort to work for the price. Stand right where you are, and I'll speak to me friend."

"Naw, Shiney—it's between you and me. I tell yer straight, dat if yer'll let me get der girl out of here wit' out any trouble, it's just der same as if I hadn't seen yer. Yer say yer know me. Well, if yer does, den yer knows dat when I gives my word dat I keeps it."

"No man keeps his word when it pays to break it."

"Yer know better den dat, Shiney. Wit' me it's just der same if I gives me word ter a crook as it is if I gives it ter Mr. Myrick."

"How about it, if you give it to Myrick first, and then finds yourself in a pinch where you has to give it to some one else to get out?"

"I ain't givin' me word on both sides of der same question. I ain't pretending, Shiney, dat I wouldn't have yer pinched if I caught yer fair anywhere in der city of New York, and I ain't promising dat I'll never do it."

"That's just it. Now you know that I'm handy, you'll set the cops of Jersey City after me, the harbor police will be on the watch, and I won't be able to stir out of this hole in the ground. No, Billy, I swore the last time that I was caught that your whole gang wouldn't be able to get hold of me again. I don't care a rap about the regular cops on the street. It's the detectives that I have to look out for, for I'm never safe so long as I know that they are laying for me. I've sworn that I would use up the detectives one by one as fast as I could get at them. A blow at you is a blow at Myrick. With you and Myrick both out of the way, I wouldn't be hiding in this dismal hole that will leave me looking, when I come out, as I looked when I escaped from Sing Sing now nearly two years ago. Boy, you don't know what it is to serve a sentence or half a sentence and then to get your liberty. A man dreads being caught worse than anything else in the world. Most men can disguise themselves, but I can't do that, with all these scars on my face. A false beard won't hide them, paint and powder makes them look the worse. If I had the face of a gorilla they couldn't spot me easier."

"Dat's right, Shiney, and I understands how yer feel about it. But wot's der use of talkin'? I give yer me word not to do a t'ing or say a word to put der cops wise."

"For how long?"

"As long as yer stays in dis place."

"But if you should meet me on any street to-morrow, what would you do?"

That was a hard question for Billy, and again the face of the man was twisted with that bitter smile.

"Yer don't like ter say, do you?" growled the convict.

"Yes, I gives yer me word on dat. If I met yer on der street to-morrow, it would be me duty to have yer pinched. But I has dis girl under me protection now, and fer her sake I'll do most anyt'ing to get out of dis scrape. I'll promise dat fer a month, I wouldn't do a

t'ing ter have yer liberty restrained, even if I meets yer every day."

"That's a fair promise."

"And I keeps it."

"As other detectives keep theirs. Do you know that it was on such a promise as that that I took chances, and was arrested four years ago. A ten years' sentence to Sing Sing was what I got for taking a detective's word. It was my nerve and good luck that got me out, and I've kept myself free by trusting no one that could possibly gain anything by giving me away."

"It's Billy of der Bowery dat gives yer der word dis time, and Billy of der Bowery makes good every time, even if der promise is ter a crook."

"That sounds well."

"But yer don't believe it?"

"I think I'll keep on the safe side. You make the promise for yourself, but how about the girl?"

"She agrees ter der same t'ing, if I axes her to."

"Ho, ho! The promise of a girl to back up the word of a detective! Worse and worse. I took a woman's promise once—and I have all these scars, and the black life I have led to pay for it. No, thank you, Bowery Billy—no woman's word for me!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNDERGROUND STRUGGLE.

"Aw, cripes!" Billy exclaimed, in disgust.

"What do you know about that girl? Have you ever tested her word?" persisted the convict.

"Naw, and I ain't goin' ter. Say, Shiney, I t'inks yer off yer nut, yer don't know what yer talkin' about. Just because a girl fooled yer once when she had some reason to do it, don't make it that dis one gives yer away, when she don't care nutting about yer, anyway. It's when a chap gets mushy wit' a girl dot she breaks her word wit' him. Den she gives him der chilly feet."

A bitter exclamation burst from the lips of the convict. He took a stride toward Billy, and the expression of his face was terrible. Mollie Jackson kept her eyes fixed upon him with a species of fascination.

Billy was smiling, and he did not stir from his tracks.

"Would yer fling dat in my face?" snarled the man.

"Fling nutting at nutting?" said Billy.

"Do you know that you are stirring up a dangerous man?"

"Naw. Say, Shiney, I t'inks yer don't know wot yer talkin' about. Yer been keepin' shady so long, and t'ings have gone so hard wit' yer dat yer don't know what's what. Wot's der use of talkin' about der old t'ings dat yer was up against when yer was nutting but a kid? Yer can't cure dem now, and all I ax of yer is ter get out of der way, and ter let me and der girl skiddoo. Yer scaring her out of her wits, and she don't even know

what all the fuss is about. If yer keeps yer mouth shut, der wouldn't be nutting fer her ter give away. Say, Shiney, take a brace and fergit it."

For a moment the man was silent.

He was embittered by the hard life he had led.

His history was a strange one, and not without its romantic side. It was only his criminal record that Billy knew anything about, and he knew that that was bad enough.

The cool common sense of Bowery Billy brought to the man a better influence for the moment. He looked again at the girl.

She was not beautiful, but there was something pathetic in the mute terror expressed in her countenance. She looked forlorn and helpless, and there was still a spark of manhood slumbering in the breast of the convict.

"I don't want to harm the girl. I was never a coward, whatever else I may have been," said the convict.

"Of course yer don't. Say, I give yer me word, and now let's cut out der talk, and we leaves yer as we come. Say, Mollie, ain't dat right?"

"Yes," she answered, in a low voice.

"Come, Shiney, wot yer says?"

"I would let the girl go, if she'll go alone."

"But I don't want to do that," she exclaimed quickly.

"Yer might do dat, Mollie, and I'll tell yer where ter go, and yer can wait fer me till me and Shiney comes ter an agreement."

"No, I'll not go until you do."

"Come, Shiney, say der word, quick, and we gets out."

Mollie Jackson suddenly stepped forward, and, to the amazement of Bowery Billy, she laid an appealing hand on the arm of Shiney.

"Let us go—please let us go, for I know that Bowery Billy would keep his word, and I promise you that you shall not regret it," she said, in a low, clear tone.

The man staggered back as if she had struck him, and for a moment he stared at her in a bewildered way.

"You make this appeal to me?" he breathed.

"Yes, and I know you will grant it. At heart you're not a hard man, and I don't believe it's all your fault that you're what you are."

"Well, girl, you're right. I've tried to be a hard man, and part of the time I've succeeded, but this is one of the times that I can't keep up to it. I'm going to take chances again, and trust the promises of both a detective and a woman, when I've said I'd never trust either again. You may go, both of you."

As the strange man said this, he turned abruptly and went back into the darkness from which he had come. Mollie drew close to the side of Billy.

"We have won," she said.

"Naw, it's yer dat wins. I don't t'ink he'd give in ter me."

"May we go now?"

"Yer'll have ter wait till he says der word. Dere's der light again, and he's beckoning ter us."

"Now we will go?"

"We'll try, anyhow. Come, before dey change deir minds."

With the girl clinging to his arm, Billy advanced. They came to where the passage was narrow and so low that a tall man might not stand erect. There were three men in the group, one of them small and thin, while the third was heavier and taller than Shiney. The smaller man was gesticulating furiously while he jabbered in some foreign tongue with his face close to that of Shiney's. As Billy and Mollie approached, this individual turned quickly, stared for an instant at the intruders, and then grabbed the arm of Mollie, crying harshly:

"You not go!—you stay here—ah, yes, you stay!"

Slap! .It was Billy's open palm on the small man's cheek, and it was such a blow that it sent the little fellow reeling against the wall of the narrow passage from which he came back, as if on the rebound, and began dancing about Billy, guarding his own face from the clips which Billy would have gotten in on him, while he sent out quick, spiteful blows at unexpected moments, and landed several of them upon Billy's person.

The Bowery lad had been up against plenty of bigger men without being touched. But now he was being stung by sharp, peppery blows that, with all his nimbleness, he was unable to elude.

For a moment Shiney looked on. Then he took a forward stride, and would have seized the small man by the shoulders, but before he could do so the heavy ruffian, who had spoken hardly a word, flung his ponderous bulk upon Shiney, hurling the latter to the ground.

"Come, Mollie, and we'll skiddoo!" said Billy.

As he spoke, he landed a kick in the small man's stomach that caused him to double up like a jack-knife.

Then the Bowery lad sprang ahead, dragging the girl after him. Before him the way was dark, and he had to pause to make sure of the way.

The small man seemed to possess a singular tenacity, else he must have been insensible to pain. Billy's kick should have put him out of the game for good, but it did so only for a moment. When the Bowery lad thought he was safe with Shiney fighting the big man, the smaller ruffian came at him again from the rear, and Billy got the fellow's fist under his ear with a stinging force that sent him headlong.

"Great bumblehutes!" gasped Billy.

He turned upon his assailant, and, while he got another crack between the eyes that did not feel good, he avoided another one by ducking, and caught his adversary around the waist, lifted him from his feet, and hurled him to the ground with all the force at his command.

"Stay dere, yer little rat!" cried Billy.

But the "little rat" was getting up again, and Billy had to fling himself upon him and make use of what he would, under other conditions, have called an unfair advantage to keep the fellow down.

Over and over the two rolled on the ground, Billy hugging the small man tight, even then having all he could do to protect his head and face from the small, hard fists that kept jabbing at him at every possible chance.

Mollie Jackson had never even dreamed of anything like it.

The damp, dismal place, with the city overhead, the dimly burning candle sticking from a niche in the wall sputtering and flickering and making grotesque shadows to dance about them; Shiney, with his horrible, scarred face, fighting desperately with the man who was fifty pounds heavier than himself, and Billy of the Bowery engaged in a strange but desperate struggle with the vicious lightweight, who, with a few more pounds, would have been more than a match for the young Bowery sleuth—making altogether a scene which should haunt the girl's memory to the end of her life.

A struggle like that could not last long. All the fight there was in Bowery Billy was stirred into activity by the stinging clips he had received. It seemed to him like old times when the young Bowery toughs used to pitch into him, and it would become a fight to a finish without a referee, and nothing counted as a foul and everything as fair.

It was gouge and punch, and, throwing all rules aside, Billy put in some work along the old lines such as he had learned on the Bowery at times when the odds were all against him. It was so that he had gotten the better of Dan, the bully, and it was so that he had taught others of the same kidney to respect the fighting qualities of the bootblack waif of the Bowery.

Billy sprang to his feet at last, and the small man did not follow him. The latter tried to rise, but fell back with a groan.

"He's all in, Mollie," said Billy.

Then, almost for the first time, Billy looked at Shiney to see how he was coming out with his assailant. Shiney had gotten upon his feet, but his face was bleeding, and the big man was pressing him back against the wall, while he clutched at the scarred throat with a big, strong hand.

The moment had come when the fugitives might escape. But Billy caught a glance from Shiney, a glance that told him that the convict was losing the fight, and that he looked for no mercy from his treacherous assailant.

"May we go?" Mollie asked.

"Not yet—Shiney's puttin' up der fight fer us, fer dem

culls didn't mean ter let us out. Dey'll kill Shiney if we leaves it like dis. Naw, I t'inks I stays in till I sees der finish, and if it turns against us, Mollie, all yer has ter do is ter keep straight ahead till yer can't go any farther. Den yer goes up an iron ladder and pushes wit' all yer strength on der round lid over yer. It's der cover of a manhole, and if yer lifts it and crawls t'rough, yer out on der street."

"I'll wait for you."

"I t'inks it won't take long, but I tells yer how ter git out if der luck goes against us."

Billy sprang toward the combatants. When Shiney had told them that he would let them out, Billy had seen him drop the revolver, which he had kept hold of until then, into a side pocket of the ragged coat which he wore. And now Billy's hand made for that pocket, found the weapon, and the next instant he was pressing the muzzle against the big man's ear.

"Let go of Shiney, or I shoots!"

The command from Bowery Billy was the first intimation that the big man had of any danger to himself, except that in front of him.

His hand fell from the throat of Shiney, and he recoiled, with a gasp of dismay.

"Up wit' yer dukes, and quick about it!"

The man's hands went up. The convict, gasping for breath, recovered himself, and said huskily:

"You—saved me, Billy!"

"Dat ain't nutting, Shiney; and now, if yer has any rope, tie up dis cull, and do it good. Come, git a hunch on yerself, fer I'm gittin' tired."

The convict searched in his pockets, and found several pieces of rope. He brought the hands of the big ruffian down behind his back, and bound his wrists tightly together.

The small man had by this time recovered his feet, but he was staggering about as if he was intoxicated.

"Better tie him up, too, fer he gives us a lot of trouble," said Billy.

Shiney complied without speaking a word.

"Now, we gits out of dis. Yer made dat fight fer us, Shiney, and yer needn't t'ink I don't remember it. I ain't in der business of helpin' crooks ter escape from der cops, but yer ain't der worst one in der bunch, and if yer can find a chance ter git way from N' York and Jersey City, yer may bet high dat yer gits all der favor dat I can give yer. If I tells Myrick of dis, he'll stand wit' me, and wot Myrick says goes."

"I want no favors from Myrick, but I will take them from you, Billy, since you think I've earned them."

"I does der best I can fer yer, and I ain't blamin' yer fer not wantin' ter go back ter Sing Sing ter finish yer sentence after bein' out fer two years. Now, Shiney, wot will yer do? Yer in here wit' dese two culls, and yer've got both of dem down on yer."

"I'll have to find another hiding place."

"And leave dem here tied up, so dey can't git out?"

"You needn't trouble about that."

"Naw, yer mustn't leave dem ter starve. Will yer try ter git out of here before mornin'?"

"Yes. But there's a big chance of my being spotted by the cops."

"Den come out wit' us. I stands by yer while yer wit' me. Der cops here knows me as well as dey does over on der other side of der river. In der mornin' I sees dat yer gits a new outfit of clothes, and if yer slicked up a bit I'm t'inkin' yer can use a railroad ticket fer der West. Yer see, Shiney, dem two culls would have been too many fer Billy of der Bowery if yer hadn't taken a hand in der fight, and dere ain't no tellin' wot would have had happened ter me and der girl if yer hadn't helped us. I ain't much of a forgitter when it comes ter dat sort of t'ing, and I likes ter pay as I goes. Wot do yer say?"

The man looked searchingly into the face of Billy. He was still suspicious, suspicious that the Bowery lad might be meditating treachery and his betrayal even then. But the clear, honest eyes of Bowery Billy, looking straight into his, reassured him.

"Aw, cripes! And do yer t'ink I'd go back on yer and have yer pinched after invitin' yer ter go wit' me? Naw, I ain't so low down as dat. Don't give up all yer trust, Shiney, fer dere's men dat keeps deir promises, and dere's gals, too. Ain't dat right, Mollie?"

"Yes."

"I'll go with you," said the convict.

He led the way along the passage while Billy flung ahead of them the rays of his flash-light. The end of the passage was reached, Billy climbed the iron ladder and pushed upward on the grating that covered the manhole.

At first he thought it was fastened down, but the next moment it yielded and fell back with a clang. Billy clambered out and reached down to help Mollie, who followed close.

Shiney, the convict, came last. Billy gave him a hand to help, for he was feeling somewhat the worse for his fight with the big ruffian. At last he stood on the street, sending quick, apprehensive glances about him.

It was an early morning hour, a little before dawn. The street was deserted, and for the convict a more favorable moment could not have been found. But as they stepped onto the sidewalk a policeman confronted them, appearing suddenly from a doorway.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST SCAR.

Shiney stood beside Billy, as the policeman advanced toward him, and looked from one to another of the trio.

Shiney looked the most disreputable of the three, and as a matter of course the policeman's hand fell on his shoulder as he gruffly said:

"Well, you are a fine-looking lot, and I think I will run you in, and let you give an account of yourselves."

"Aw, green bananers, Jeff!" said Billy, with a swift look into the face of Shiney, who did not move a muscle.

The policeman then looked at Billy. Both the Bowery lad and Mollie Jackson still showed the evidence of their plunge in the North River. Billy's face had been bruised by the fists of the furious little man who had attacked him so fiercely in the underground fight. Yet it was the face of Billy, and this particular patrolman knew Bowery Billy as well as he did any policeman in his own precinct. For, upon more than one occasion, Billy required favors of the Jersey City police.

"Ah, Bowery Billy, is it?" exclaimed the officer. And his hand fell from the shoulder of Shiney, while his countenance assumed a puzzled expression.

"Sure t'ing, Jeff. Me and me friends have been so-journing down under the streets for our health, and we just come up to take a look around. I was t'inkin' of takin' a contract for buildin' a tunnel under Jersey City, clear t'rough to Newark. Me friends, here, come along to help me spy out the land. Yer swallow dat yarn, don't yer, Jeff?"

"Sure, Billy. I swallow anything that you say. But, really, you look as if you had been up against it good and hard. You can't blame me for being a little curious to see you and this young lady, and that tough-looking pilgrim climbing up out of a manhole over here in Jersey. I suppose I'll have to take that explanation that you just offered me?"

"Sure t'ing, Jeff, fer it's all dat I have ter give. Me and der girl have been takin' a swim. She is from der country, and der town where she lives is a wet place even in dry weather, and dey has water ter burn. But, say, Jeff, yer can do us a favor. It's rather early fer the department stores to open up, even over here in Jersey, but I'm t'inkin' dat yer can run us into a joint somewhere where der is a Sheeny dat will fit us out wit' some new togs. We wants ter save dese clothes to wear dis afternoon ter der matinay."

"What in thunder are you driving at, Billy?"

"I ain't drivin' at a spike, Jeff, so don't let it worry yer. How about der joint, and the Sheeny outfit? And wot's der time of day, Jeff? I had der water-motor taken out of me watch, and so it quit runnin' while I walked across North River. I wants ter keep track of der time, as I has an appointment wit' John D. Rockey-feller to help him deliver some Standard Oil at half-past five o'clock. He gives me t'ree cents fer der job. Come, Jeff, hurry up, fer we ain't bluffin' about der Sheeny."

"Did you really want to get in somewhere, Billy, to get some dry clothing for the young lady and yourself?"

"Dat's der stuff, Jeff. Der oughter be a young lady's misfit parlor presided over by a hook-nose dat's out fer der early worms somewhere around here. Ain't dat right?"

"Yes, I do know of just such a place two blocks north of here, just at the limit of my beat. You do look pretty rocky, Billy, and the young lady, if I must say so, looks as if she ought to be hung up in the back area to dry. But this man, Billy—say, he looks——"

The policeman lowered his voice and bent his face close to that of Billy as he spoke.

"Aw, shut up, Jeff, and find me the Sheeny-beak. He's a friend of mine, and a near relation of John D. He started life when he was a small boy up on a Jersey farm, and he tried to dig potatoes wit' a mowin'-machine, and after dat dey run him t'rough a hay-cutter, and before he got over der hurt he got a mule kick from a horse. Yer see, he had a good deal of trouble. Aw, say, Jeff, if yer don't want ter find out t'ings don't ask me no questions, fer I has-ter answer wit' somet'ing, or yer pinches me fer bein' sassy. Dat's all, Jeff."

The policeman was chuckling, for, while he knew he had not gained a word of truth from Billy, he admired the Bowery lad for his style of bluffing a great deal more than he would have done had Billy attempted to tell some sort of a plausible yarn that really contained no more fact than the one he had really given.

The policeman understood well enough that there was something about the man with a scarred face which Billy did not care to explain. The officer would have liked to know about it, but there would be no use of asking Billy any more questions.

"I'll go around with you, and try if I can wake up the Jew in the misfit parlor. It's a little past five, and I've known him to open his shop at six. Come along."

The officer led the way to the place in question. It was a small shop on the ground floor in an old two-story building, and the proprietor lived over it. The policeman rang the bell, and the Jew came down to the door promptly. Jeff briefly told him what was wanted, they were let into the shop, the wife of the proprietor was called to attend to the wants of Mollie Jackson, while the Jew himself attended to Billy and Shiney.

Of course they obtained some great bargains, and Billy had the money to pay for the goods. When, half an hour later, the trio returned to the street, any one who had seen them go in would hardly have recognized them.

"Now, Shiney, wot do yer want ter do wit' yerself?" Billy asked.

"I'm under your orders, Billy. I look rather better in this rig, but I haven't much money," said the convict.

"Don't yer want ter get out of dis der way I suggested ter yer?"

"You mean take a train for the West?"

"Yes."

"It would be the best thing I could do. But without money it is hard work. Once on a time I took a ride hugging a brake-beam on a freight, but that was too much for me. Anything but that."

"I gets yer a ticket fer Chicigo, if yer promises me one t'ing."

"What is the promise?"

"That when yer get there yer will stay, git respectable work to do, and stick ter it."

"Respectable work, with such a face as mine!"

"Sure t'ing. Yer face doesn't queer yer fer any kind of labor, and I don't t'ink it t'rows yer down fer any kind of decent work."

"I'll try it, Billy."

"And yer won't come back ter New York, in any case?"

"For one reason I would like to do it."

"Yer means dat yer would like ter come back?"

"Yes."

"What fer?"

"For revenge on those who were the most merciless in hounding me until they got a ten years' sentence passed on me, and sent me to Sing Sing, meaning to keep me there the best part of my life. Maybe I deserved it, but I don't think that I did. There were three men on that jury who were more determined than all the others to have me convicted. They, with the government attorney, swayed the convictions of the others. I believe the judge favored my acquittal. How do you suppose I feel toward the ones who sent me to Sing Sing."

"Does yer tell me, Shiney, dat yer was innocent?"

"Yes, I was innocent. Not that I had committed no crime, for I had, but a far lighter one, for which I would have been willing to pay the penalty. I don't pretend, Billy, that I haven't done enough since to make me deserving of the whole sentence."

"Of course I don't know, Shiney, dat yer are tellin' me der trut', and it's natural fer yer ter put it dat way. I'm takin' some chances meself when I offered ter help yer ter escape. I ain't got any right ter do it, but I'm goin' ter, just der same, if yer makes der promise dat I axes of yer."

"Well, I'll promise that. I'll throw overboard the scheme for revenge, but probably I would be caught before I could carry it through, anyway."

"All right, den, I gets yer der ticket fer Chicigo. Dat comes out of me pocket. After yer gets dere, yer can find labor ter do, and I happens ter know dat yer has der brains ter do something better. Yer face is pretty bad, wit' all dem scars, but if yer makes good it doesn't queer yer entirely."

"Thank you, Billy; I'll make one more try for it."

They made their way to the Pennsylvania station. They found that the through trains would not leave for three hours. Billy did not wish to keep his companion waiting all that time, and yet he dared not leave Shiney unguarded, for there was the chance of his being seen and recognized by some officer who might be on the watch.

Billy knew it was rumored that the convict was in hiding somewhere in, or near, New York, and that the police were keenly on the lookout for him. And Billy was resolved that the man should not fall into their hands on account of having trusted him. He would prove to Shiney that a detective could keep his word, even after it was given to a criminal.

Bowery Billy had not yet had time to decide what to do in the case of Mollie Jackson. She had not yet told him her story. Her leap from the ferry-boat in which he had followed in going to her rescue would make a story for the morning papers. Yet Billy did not suppose for a moment that the officers of the police department would believe that he had been drowned in the attempt at rescue. Then the Jersey City patrolman, whom he had just talked with, would nail as false a report of that kind.

The rumor would soon spread that, in some manner, Billy had rescued the girl from the river. Then those who were in quest of her would be put all the more keenly on the scent.

For that matter, although Billy did not know it, neither Dickson nor Wilma Denton had given up their attempt to meet the girl from the country, whom they knew had been hiding on the ferry-boat.

At the time when they seemed to give up the waiting task, they had merely gone to the Cortlandt Street Ferry and crossed on that to Jersey City. And, at the very moment when the other ferry-boat from which the girl had made the leap reached her slip on the Jersey side, and the search for Mollie Jackson and Billy was being made, Wilma Denton and Dickson were there on the lookout for them.

They heard the story of what had happened. Dickson at first believed that the girl had been drowned in her reckless leap. But Wilma Denton scouted the idea.

"If she is drowned, so is Billy of the Bowery. And you couldn't drown him any more than you could a fish. No—where Bowery Billy is, there may Mollie Jackson be found. Ah! but he's a foxy lad, and he's got a long head on him."

"Then, what will we do?"

"Stay over this side till we get track of them. They were picked up by no boat. Bowery Billy was once a wharf-rat, and his earliest detective work was done around the East River docks. They will get ashore somehow, in their wet togs, and it ought to be easy for

us to spot them. Bowery Billy will find a way out of every scrape. We'll make sure of them, Dickson."

And so they kept at work, and Billy had matched against him, in Wilma Denton, one who could be no easier fooled than himself.

When Billy and his companion went into the Pennsylvania Railroad station, Dickson and his companion saw them enter. And when, nearly an hour later, Billy left Shiney and Mollie Jackson together for a few moments, Dickson and Wilma Denton approached them both.

Billy had warned the girl sufficiently against Dickson, so that she was no longer ready to entrust herself to the young man's care, as she had at first intended to do. She recognized him instantly.

The young man advanced with his head down and looking at her through his heavy brows. He was smiling, and he reached out his hand to greet her. At the same time from his companion there came a startled exclamation.

"Shiney!"

The convict turned upon the young woman while a sudden, deep flush spread over his face, causing the scars to shine forth with a distinctness that rendered them doubly hideous. At the same time Mollie Jackson, mindful of Bowery Billy's warning, sprang suddenly to her feet and seized the arm of the convict in a mute appeal for protection.

"Say, Shiney, how's this?" demanded Wilma Denton, pointing at Mollie.

There was a strange glare in the eyes of Shiney, but he did not speak. He drew the arm of his companion within his own and led her hastily toward an exit. Dickson sprang after him, exclaiming:

"Mollie, Mollie! Why is this? I've been looking and waiting for you all through the night. Would you leave me now?"

Shiney wheeled like lightning.

"Let her alone!" he commanded.

Dickson recoiled as if he was terrified by the aspect of the man's face and the tone of his voice. But Wilma Denton ran lightly forward, as graceful as a tigress.

"Let go of that girl, Shiney—you'd better!" she cried.

"No!" thundered the convict.

"Won't you? Yonder at the door stands a cop. Would you have me tell him what a prize is waiting here for him? Would you have me give you away, Shiney?"

"You don't dare!"

"Don't I? Let go of that girl and get out of here, or I'll show you."

Shiney clenched his hands, and the veins stood out on his forehead like purple cords.

"Call, if you dare, for there are two of us, Wilma Denton, and you know it. If he gets one prize, he has two."

"Let go of the girl, Shiney, and quick about it. Dick-

son, you fool, why do you stand there as if you was petrified? Seize the girl before it's too late. There is no one observing, any kind of a bluff will do, a quick rush, you hustle her into a cab, and away you go. Do you give it all up now?"

The girl's taunt stung Dickson into action. He stepped forward quickly and caught the arm of Mollie. She tried to cry out, but her voice was smothered with terror.

Like lightning Shiney whirled upon Dickson, and a quick, terrible blow was struck, a blow that almost lifted Dickson from his feet and landed him in an insensible heap upon the floor.

The face of Wilma Denton became white as death. She saw victory slipping from her grasp, she saw that the game she had been playing was at an end, and that it was defeat for her.

There was not one there who dreamed what a desperate game that had been. Not even Dickson knew why this girl had been so interested in the scheme against Mollie Jackson.

For Dickson the reward was to be a little money and the girl, with whom he had become infatuated. Why Wilma Denton should be so anxious for his success he had never even asked.

The policeman whom they had seen standing with his back toward them in the doorway was interested in some trifling occurrence on the street outside. The altercation had been carried on in such low tones that he had heard no part of it, and at the moment when Shiney had knocked Dickson down the officer was stepping out onto the street. The big waiting-room was almost empty.

So much Wilma Denton had observed, and at the same time she realized that if she would cause the arrest of Shiney she would have to meet the same fate. There was at least a chance for her to escape, and in the act of doing so it would not be difficult for her to betray the convict, and so repay him for the defeat he was causing her by standing as the champion of the girl from the country.

Why he should be there, and how he came to be guarding Mollie Jackson, was a puzzle which Wilma Denton had no time to even attempt to solve.

All the chances for winning and losing flashed through the brain of the girl with a singular swiftness. To her it was a desperate moment, and if she could not win in the way she had planned, she could at least defeat those who were opposed to her.

In her hand appeared a revolver, and she quickly pointed the weapon at Mollie, while her gaze was fixed upon the face of the convict.

"Come with me, Mollie Jackson!" she ordered.

"No, no!" quavered the girl.

"That man dare not hold you back, for I'll betray him to the police if he does. He's an escaped convict from

Sing Sing, and there's a price on his head. Come with me, girl, and I'll spare you both. Refuse, and true as I live I'll shoot you, throw the pistol at the feet of Shiney, call the police to arrest him, and swear that he did the deed. Not a soul will doubt my word given against his. Come, for it's the only chance for either of you."

Mollie tried to draw away from her companion.

"No!" again said Shiney. And he drew her back forcibly, and at the same time thrust himself between her and Wilma Denton.

A low hiss of rage like that of a snake escaped the lips of Wilma Denton. She dodged to one side, and her weapon was leveled at Mollie.

"You, my girl, shall not win even if I have to lose!" she exclaimed.

With a hoarse cry Shiney flung himself toward the desperate woman. At the same time the revolver blazed and the bullet sped, a bullet intended for the heart of the girl from the country, who had unwittingly become involved in the strange plot.

Shiney well understood the desperate purpose of the woman. She was beyond his reach, he could neither grasp her hand to stay the act, nor was there time to give the alarm or for Mollie to flee from her fate. There was only one thing that Shiney could do for the girl who had been left to his protection. And that thing he did.

It was a moment for quick action, and he knew what would be the path of the bullet. He could not prevent the shot, but he could stop its flight.

And so at the instant that the pistol barked, the form of Shiney, the convict, was thrust between the weapon and the intended victim. The bullet struck him fairly in the breast. Yet as he felt its terrible sting with a last conscious effort his arms swept toward the assailant, his hand grasped the weapon, and as it was discharged the second time, and the bullet plowed a furrow across his cheek, he wrenched it from her grasp, hurled it across the long room and sent it crashing through a window.

Then he fell forward upon his face at the feet of the woman who would have taken the life of Mollie Jackson.

At the same instant there was a hustle of footsteps and cries of alarm. In through the doorway where the policeman had appeared a minute before rushed Bowery Billy.

Wilma Denton, with a desperate scream, turned to flee in the opposite direction. But the hand of Billy caught her shoulder, and as she turned upon him he pinioned her arms at her sides with a strength that she could not match even in her frenzy. He bore her back, and flung her upon a seat. The policeman from the street and several station officers rushed to the spot, and at a word from Billy the desperate woman was made a prisoner.

The moment he was at liberty, Bowery Billy rushed to Shiney, who had rolled over upon his back and lay

gasping and groaning. Already the hue of death was creeping over his face.

"Say, Shiney, dis is too bad!" said Billy.

"That—that is the woman—that I spoke of—that first betrayed me!" murmured Shiney.

"Yer means Wilma Denton?"

"Yes."

"And now, Shiney, I'm t'inkin' yer all in! Dat's tough. And it was she dat shot yer?"

"It was meant for the other girl. She would have—killed her—but, never mind—it gives me only one more scar!"

The convict closed his eyes. His lips moved as he tried to speak again, but there was only a husky sound in his throat, and Billy saw that it was the end.

During it all Mollie Jackson had stood as if paralyzed. Dickson had half-risen to his feet, but at a word from Billy a policeman took him in charge. Billy spoke to the girl.

"Did dat woman mean der bullet fer yer?" he asked.

"Yes. She said she would shoot me if I wouldn't go with her, that she'd throw the pistol at the feet of Shiney, and tell the police he did it."

"And he jumped between yer and got der lead dat was intended fer yer?"

"Yes."

"Den he saved yer life, and t'rowed in his own ter do it. Well, I'm t'inkin' dat Shiney did a white t'ing at der last dat blots out der dark record of his life. Maybe it's jest as well fer him, and yet—aw, green bananers!"

Mollie Jackson was crying.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

Bowery Billy took care that Mollie Jackson should return to New York by a different route from that by which she had been expected by her crusty father. Billy had saved her from the direct consequences of her folly, but it was not his purpose to give the ill-natured old man the coveted chance to inflict retribution on him.

The first thing for Billy to do, therefore, was to provide for the safety and comfort of his charge. Having done this, he found a little difficulty in finding Hiram Jackson, who, as it was natural to suppose, was a good deal disturbed over the report that his daughter had jumped from the ferry-boat into the North River, and was possibly drowned.

The police had been doing what they could to discover what had become of the girl. Their doubts were settled in one respect by the police of Jersey City, for the officer known as Jeff had reported his encounter with Bowery Billy, and the fact that he had a young lady with him, who had evidently been in the water. Then the affair at the railway-station became known to the police of New

York soon after it was reported on the Jersey City side. But more than this the police did not know, and more than this, therefore, Hiram Jackson could not learn from the sources of information which were available to him.

For that matter, he did not find the police particularly agreeable in answering his inquiries. He was so crusty and disagreeable in his manner that he got them out of sorts, and mighty little satisfaction would they give him.

This suited Billy.

The Bowery lad wanted to do what was best for Mollie. Just what that might be, he would know better after he had looked into the case a little deeper.

Therefore, after providing for her comfort for a short time, and telling her to get some sleep, he hunted up Jackson.

The man greeted him almost savagely.

"So you got around after awhile, did you?" he growled. "Now, what have you done with my girl?"

"Der girl is all right and safe, and you can go home in peace," said Billy.

"But where is she? I'm going to take her back with me."

"Aw, be yer? Dat depends, cully. I got yer toned down a little last night, and yer seemed to be willin' ter be reasonable. But yer too plug-ugly to use the girl decent, and yer don't take her home wit' yer till yer promises me dat yer'll do der square t'ing. Den dere is somet'ing more—dere is somet'ing about dis dat I don't understand. Yer knows der girl comes ter dis city to meet a young chap by appointment. Ain't dat right?"

"I suppose so. Like a good many girls without any sense in their heads, she got carried away with the young chap that she knew nothing about. She thought that she was abused at home, and she had a notion that she would be better off here in the city. But I'm thinking that I'll knock some sense into her head when I get her back."

"Aw, but we cuts dat out. I wants yer ter answer me a t'ing or two, and I wants yer ter do it straight. Is Mollie yer own daughter?"

"Why—er—just the same. I married her mother when Mollie was three years old. Her mother's first husband was my own brother, and so, besides being Mollie's stepfather, I'm her uncle, so yer see she's my flesh and blood."

"Dat's all right. Now, fer another t'ing. Yer'd been married before yer married Mollie's mother?"

"Who said I had?"

"And yer had a daughter of yer own, as much as ten years older than Mollie. Yer daughter and Mollie were cousins, and in one respect dey look a good deal alike—in more dan one respect, when it comes ter dat."

There was a strange expression on Jackson's face. He looked as if he had seen a ghost.

"How in thunder did you know all this?" he demanded.

"I'm t'inkin' dat a little bird told me. And dat daughter of yer own was a wild duck, and she come here ter der big city, and she got next ter some crooks and raised high jinks on a low scale. But she was a corker, and her first name was Wilma, and der last name she sailed under was Denton. And, say, when yer married der mother of Mollie, Wilma was as mad as time, because she t'ought dere was no show fer her gettin' yer property. And then——"

Hiram Jackson seized Billy's arm, and fairly glared into his face.

"Tell me!" he cried. "How did you get hold of all this?"

"Aw, shut up, old man, fer it's sassy ter break in when a kid like me is talkin'. Yer daughter Wilma made t'ings so warm in der new home, and she hated der little Mollie so bad, dat yer give her der grand bounce. Aw, yer didn't use yer own girl right, any more dan yer did Mollie. It ain't in yer ter use anybody right, fer yer so bloomin' ugly dat all yer wants ter do is ter boss, and boss, and if dey're kids yer t'rashes dem, and if dey're grown up, yer just works yer jaw till yer makes dem tired. Aw, but yer der limit, and yer ain't fit ter have a daughter, and if yer had a son he ought ter be big enough ter lick yer, and, by cripes, I'd like ter be der kid ter do it!"

Billy was a good deal excited. But Hiram Jackson was more so.

He sank into a chair, and stared at Billy in mute astonishment.

"How did you know this?" he demanded once more, after a long interval of silence.

"Well, old man, I'll tell yer. Der was a girl mixed up wit' der cull dat has been tryin' ter fool Mollie. She is built like Mollie, and her hair is like Mollie's, but dey don't look much alike in deir faces. She felt ugly as sin toward Mollie, and it was she dat was behind Dickson in der whole scheme. Aw, Dickson ain't nutting, and all he knows enough ter do is to dance when Wilma pulls der string. But, say, dat girl is smart as lightnin', but she has a plug-ugly streak in her just like yerself. It always comes out worse in a woman, and she's one of the sort like yerself dat's bound ter have her own way. Aw, but she hated Mollie, and dis morning she tried ter shoot her. Now she's pinched. Dat's all, old man, except, when it comes ter Mollie, yer never gets her back till yer starts a straight deal. Now, if der is any of dese t'ings dat I've been sayin' ter yer dat yer wants ter deny dis is yer chance."

Jackson drew a long breath. The whole manner of the man had changed, and the next time he spoke Billy would have hardly recognized his voice.

"It is all true!" he said. "And you say she—Wilma—is arrested?"

"Over in Jersey. I had her pinched by the Jersey cops, as I had no right ter do it meself. She tried ter shoot Mollie, and der chap dat was wit' her, an escaped convict from Sing Sing, dat we call Shiney, stepped between dem and saved der life of Mollie."

Jackson leaped to his feet and clutched Billy's arm.

"And Shiney, as you call him—what became of him?"

"He's all in. Der shot dat was meant fer Mollie did fer him—he t'rowed in his life ter save der girl's, so if he was a crook der last t'ing dat he did was white."

"And Wilma killed him!" gasped the man.

"I don't suppose she meant ter, but she did it, just der same."

"This is pretty hard. Say, Barlow, I must see her—I must see Wilma. Yes, I was harsh to her, and she had too much spirit to put up with it, and she ran away from home, and she swore she would make me pay dearly for marrying a second time. Yes, it is Wilma, my wild and wayward daughter, made so, as she told me many times, by my harshness. Where is she? Take me to her, will you?"

"She is at the police headquarters in Jersey City. Likely yer can see her if yer goes over dere."

"Will you go with me?"

"Sure t'ing."

"And will you tell me where Mollie is?"

"Not yet—but soon, maybe."

Before going over to Jersey City with Hiram Jackson, Billy went to see Myrick, for he knew that the headquarters fox would be anxious to hear from his lips an account of what had really happened.

Myrick had never listened to one of Bowery Billy's yarns with a keener interest than he did to this one.

"There is a queer come-out to that story," said Myrick. "It's romantic, and rather terrible. It's the sort of yarn that I don't like to get mixed up in, for it reminds me of experiences that I would like to forget."

"I'm t'inkin' dat it ain't come out yet. Does yer t'ink dat Wilma stands for all that's likely to come ter her? Naw. Maybe she goes ter trial. But she never faces der sentence."

"Likely you are right, Billy. As to the other girl, Mollie, what do you propose to do with her?"

"I'm t'inkin' dat der old man gets softened up by dis business. He seems ter be broke up now, and der last part of me talk wit' him he wasn't like der same cull. Now, I goes over ter Jersey wit' him. Later we decides about Mollie."

It is not needful to give in detail here an account of the meeting betwixt Hiram Jackson and his wayward daughter.

All the harshness and will-power seemed to go out of

the nature of the hard-hearted old man. But not so with her. She refused to listen to his proffered sympathy; she scoffed at his plea for forgiveness. She flung in his face the charge that he was to blame for her failure in life. There was no hard thing that could be said to him that she did not say. She said that she would not accept a dollar of his money, or anything that he might do in her defense.

When the man left her at last it seemed as if all the spirit that had been in him when he went into her cell had been killed.

He went back with Bowery Billy to his hotel in the greater city so changed in his whole manner that Billy would not have known him.

When they reached the hotel, Jackson abruptly said:

"May I not see my Mollie?"

"Sure t'ing. But I goes wit' yer."

"Of course. But yer have no fear for her. I want her to go back with me, but not unless she is willing to do so. Life is going to be hard for me after this, and I don't want to rule my family any more. I don't want to rule the town, nor anything. Barlow, I feel like a child, as helpless as one. I begged for Wilma's forgiveness, and she refused it. Do you suppose Mollie would refuse?"

"Naw, I don't t'ink. Mollie is a different sort, and if yer uses her right, yer makes her like yer. She ain't hard."

So they went together to see Mollie, and Jackson's interview with his stepdaughter ended very differently from the one with his own daughter.

Before the talk was ended Mollie was sitting at his side and telling him everything. Later, Billy saw Mollie alone, and she readily agreed to go back with her stepfather. Indeed, she preferred to do so.

She promised, however, to inform Billy later if her stepfather remained the same. On that score Billy had few doubts, and even these doubts were dispelled after the trial and conviction of Wilma Denton of the crime of manslaughter.

Contrary to Billy's expectation, the young woman received her sentence—that of ten years' imprisonment. But the execution of the sentence was hardly begun when it was found that she was suffering from disease of a mortal character, and the prison doctor predicted that she would not live through the year.

Dickson received a lighter sentence, for he had neither the wit nor the energy to be a successful crook.

The two men who had been with Shiney, and who had attempted to prevent the escape of Billy and Mollie Jackson from the passage under the street, both proved to be escaped convicts from a Western penitentiary, and they were sent back upon requisition to serve out their sentences.

The home of Mollie Jackson became a home indeed

after her return. Her stepfather could not have been kinder had he been an own parent. For that matter, he became a different man toward all with whom he came in contact.

Meanwhile, Bowery Billy was, as he expressed it, next to something in the way of a new case, which came to him from an unexpected source. It was all on account of Jonah, the lank, forlorn lad, who seemed to be born to pose as an easy mark.

Billy had taken Jonah under his wing, as he was forever doing in the case of unlucky lads whom he fell in with.

Jonah was willing to work, and Billy found him one job after another, which for some reason he was not able to keep.

So far as Billy could learn, Jonah was not to blame for losing the places. It all seemed to be luck.

"I'm all discouraged, Billy," complained Jonah, the third time that he came to Billy to report that he was out of work.

"Wot in t'under is it dis time?" Billy demanded.

"I dunno. It wa'n't none of my fault, the boss said. He says that he has a nephew that wanted the job, and he had sort of promised it to him, so he supposed he would have to let him have it."

"And der last place der feller had a cousin dat he'd promised der place ter. Dat's der way it is wit' yer. Aw, cripes, but yer a Jonah, all right."

"But what can I do?"

"Git mad and tell 'em ter send der relations ter t'under. If dey promises der jobs to dem, wot does dey give 'em ter you fer?"

"I don't know. Their relations don't seem to know what they want to do till the last minute. Oh, it's all my luck. It has always been that way with me, and I guess it always will."

"Well, Jonah, I tries once more. I t'inks I has a good chance fer yer now. I puts yer next ter it, and I wants yer ter hustle and make yerself so useful dat dey will jest have ter keep yer."

"It won't be no use. Something is bound to turn up."

"Dat's der trouble wit' yer. Yer always lookin' fer trouble, and so yer gits it. But if yer loses der next job t'rough no fault of yer own I t'inks I supports yer wit'out doin' nutting."

"I wouldn't let you do that, Billy, and you know it."

"We won't worry about it, Jonah. But yer mustn't try ter make yer name good."

Billy obtained a new position for Jonah, and the young man proved by his work that Billy's guess had come out right.

THE END.

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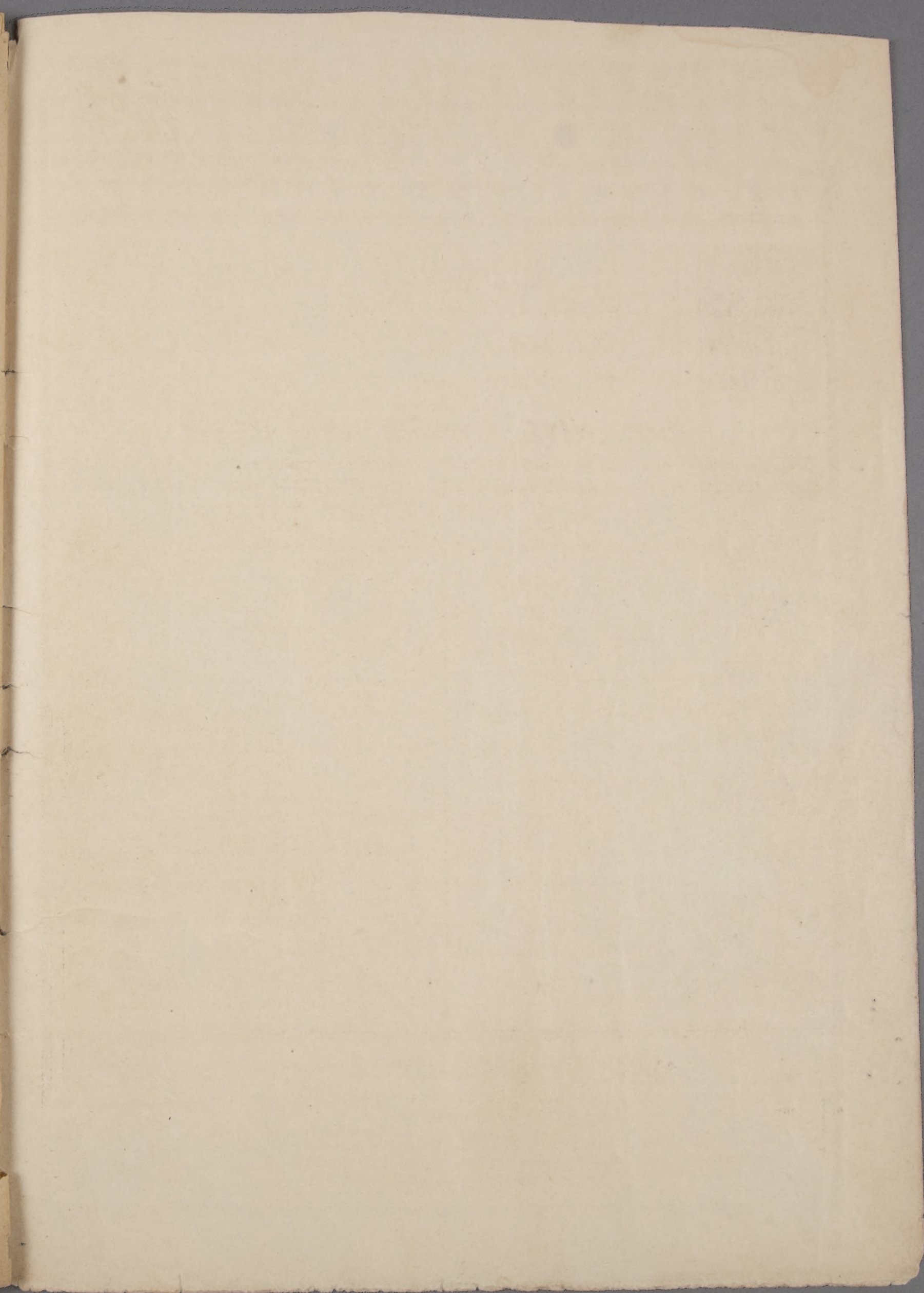
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